

Fourteenth meeting of the Noumea Convention

Fourteenth ordinary meeting of the contracting parties to the convention for the protection of the natural resources and environment of the South Pacific Region and related protocols (Noumea Convention)

Apia, Samoa

14 September 2017

Agenda Item 7.4: Cleaner Oceans for a Cleaner Pacific

Purpose

1. To inform the Parties of the importance of best practice in waste management and pollution control as an effective mechanism for addressing marine pollution, and to seek the commitment of Parties to actively participate in these initiatives to sustain the long-term health of the Pacific Ocean and its people.

Background

2. Marine pollution results from entry into the ocean of harmful chemicals, polluted wastewaters, industrial, agricultural and residential waste, garbage from ships, and the spread of invasive organisms. Marine plastic and microplastic pollution from land- and sea- based sources are increasingly being identified as priority concerns by the global environmental community due to the transboundary nature of their movements as highlighted at the recent UN Oceans Conference in New York.
3. Marine pollution presents a significant threat to the Pacific with 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of each PICT and 165.2 million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean that encompasses the marine ecosystems that support the region.
4. The persistent nature and impact of marine plastic pollutants are many-fold and include high financial costs of cleaning up coastal communities; negative impacts to local tourism and fishing-dependent economies; reduced food security; hazards to navigation and safety at sea; damage to important and fragile coastal ecosystems, and harm to marine wildlife through entanglement and ingestion; and introduction of invasive species.
5. Further, the problem is growing – a global review found a 49% increase in reports of marine species being entangled in and ingesting marine debris between 1997 and 2015. A recent study of ingestion of plastic by fish in the Pacific region found plastic ingestion by 97% of examined fish species.

6. How much material enters the ocean is dependent largely on the extent and effectiveness of wastewater and solid waste collection and management. PICTs can be particularly vulnerable to marine litter impacts due to financial and institutional challenges in properly managing waste before it is transferred to the marine environment and from the negative socioeconomic impacts of marine litter, especially in poorer coastal communities.

Stopping marine pollution at the source

7. Waste Management and Pollution Control is one of four regional goals prioritised in the SPREP Strategic Plan 2017-2026, with lead responsibility for regional coordination and delivery of actions under Cleaner Pacific 2025.
8. An holistic approach to waste management and pollution control, as proposed in Clearer Pacific 2025, paves the way for addressing marine pollution. It involves setting in place policies and regulatory frameworks, meeting international and national obligations for hazardous wastes and chemicals; improving waste management infrastructure and facilities; reducing waste through recycling and recovery; capitalising on opportunities to convert waste to wealth; enhancing human capacity and skills through knowledge transfer and training; changing waste disposal behaviours and consumer choices; and tracking progress to inform decision-making processes. Collectively, these initiatives can reduce and ultimately prevent waste entering the ocean.
9. SPREP, working alongside Member countries has resulted in much progress in waste management and pollution control. On-ground outcomes have included improvements to dump sites and landfills, use of incinerators to dispose of medical waste, private and public partnerships established to recycle items such as scrap metal and used lead acid batteries, and reduction in waste streams through composting of organic and green waste. Ratification of international, regional and national agreements, compliance action on international laws such as MARPOL, and PacPOL, and the development of national waste strategies and policies, coupled with capacity building training events, have also led to positive outcomes.
10. There is still much to be accomplished to achieve longer-term self-sufficiency in this area for Parties. The global concern over marine plastic and microplastic pollution and the declining health of the world's oceans provides the incentive to continue the journey towards best practice in waste management and pollution control.
11. SPREP is well placed to continue their role for regional coordination and delivery of actions under Cleaner Pacific 2025 through such initiatives as PacWaste Plus and GEF 7, MEA agreements, and working with key international and regional partners such as IMO, J-PRISM II, SPC, the academic sector, consultants and other experts.



Challenges and opportunities

12. A holistic approach delivered through planning and policy processes and driven through a community-based social-marketing strategy with the following elements:
 - a. Addressing waste disposal behaviours through the use of formal and community-based social-marketing campaigns to shift to a state where best practice becomes the social norm.
 - b. Infrastructure, facilities and equipment along with capacity building through training to support best practice in waste disposal
 - c. Reducing waste through 3R+ and recovery including the establishment and expansion of social enterprises (e.g. CBOs and FBOs) and public-private partnerships
 - d. Clean-up operations to assist with the transition to better waste management practices as well as removal of legacy waste
 - e. Information and monitoring, supported by technology, to assist decision-making and track progress
 - f. Adoption of locally appropriate and affordable technologies in the disposal of waste
13. The challenges in rolling out such a strategy are not new and include: addressing the diversity of issues faced by Members; the geographical isolation of PICTs; remoteness from international markets; low populations along with dependency on imported goods and foreign/outside aid; and competing government priorities.

Recommendations

14. The Parties are invited to:
 - **note** the progress made in waste management and pollution control, a productive collaboration between SPREP, Parties and other partners;
 - **note** that the success of such activities has been based on strong commitment from participating countries; and
 - **commit** as Parties to participate fully in waste management and pollution control interventions to stop marine pollution at its source.

18 August, 2017

