

AGENDA ITEM 12.3.4:

Implementation of the Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan

Purpose of Paper

1. To update Members on progress of the implementation of the marine litter action plan including the recent Samoa Pacific Games 2019.

Background

2. The **2015 SPREP Meeting** endorsed the *Pacific Regional Waste and Pollution Management Strategy 2016-2025 (Cleaner Pacific 2025)* with marine litter as one of the focal areas.
3. The **2017 Forum Leaders Meeting** committed to fast track the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastic bags, plastic and styrofoam packaging and called on Pacific Rim partners to commit to action on addressing marine pollution and marine debris to maintain the environmental integrity of the Pacific. The **2018 Forum Leaders Meeting** further recognised that waste is a critical issue for the Blue Pacific Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to eliminate marine litter and the urgent need to implement the **Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025 (PMLAP)**.
4. In 2018 the **SPREP Executive Board** and the participants of the 2nd Clean Pacific Roundtable endorsed the PMLAP.
5. The PMLAP was developed in 2018 with funding support from the UN Environment Programme Regional Seas Programme Clean Seas Campaign. The PMLAP is an outcome of the framework of the *Cleaner Pacific 2025* as well as the *Pacific Oceans Prevention Pollution Programme (PACPOL) 2015-2020*. The PMLAP covers 11 pillars that includes legislative instruments, prevention of shipping and terrestrial pollution, management of transboundary waste, behaviour change and disaster waste management.

Action by Pacific Island Members to Address Marine Plastic Pollution

6. Pacific island countries have been proactive in addressing marine plastic pollution through the introduction of bans. Eight Pacific island countries have banned single-use plastics in an effort to address marine plastic pollution and microplastics and a further seven countries have announced their intention to ban plastics. These are:
 - Ban on importation of non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags – American Samoa and PNG;
 - Ban on single-use plastic shopping bags – Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, FSM Yap State and Palau;
 - Ban on single-use plastics shopping bags, polystyrene, plastic cutleries – Republic of the Marshall Islands;
 - Ban on single-use plastic bags and straws – Samoa and Vanuatu;
 - Ban on single-use plastics – New Caledonia;
 - Intent to ban single use plastics - Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu.
7. **In 2019** the Government of Samoa with the assistance of SPREP initiated the Greening of the Games (GoG) campaign, which was a key activity in the implementation of the PMLAP to raise awareness and actions to reduce the use of single-use plastics at sporting events as well as carbon footprint offsets. The GoG was implemented by the Government of Samoa Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment with support from SPREP and the Pacific Games Office. It provides

alternatives for single-use plastic water bottles, take-away food containers and shopping bags, provides rehydration stations for refilling reusable water bottles, carbon footprint offsets through planting of trees and champions behaviour change through multiple channels, including athletics. The GoG was supported by the UNEP Regional Seas Clean Seas Programme, Australian Government (DFAT), New Zealand (MFAT), France (AFD), and the United Kingdom. The legacy of the GoG campaign included the donation of 150 of the 250 hydration water stations to local schools after the games; a sustainability strategy; tools and guidelines for future sporting events; as well as carbon footprint offsets. GoG implementation and lessons learned will be applied to future Pacific Games events.

8. The impact of the campaign to green the games attracted praise from both athletes and officials. For Samoa, the Games had a noticeable change in the mindset and behavior of the public in terms of their awareness of the issue of plastics.
9. The Government of the Solomon Islands - the host of the next Pacific Games in 2023 has indicated that it plans to have a plastics free Games, and in a recent meeting with the Director General of SPREP, the Prime Minister requested the support of SPREP to ensure that it achieves this objective.
10. Pacific countries have been instrumental in the adoption of key instruments to address ship sourced marine pollution:
 - The WCPFC Conservation Management Measure (2017-04) for Marine Pollution to implement MARPOL (lead RMI). This measure came into force on the 1st January 2019;
 - The International Maritime Organization Marine Litter Action Plan, led by Vanuatu, was adopted in October 2018.
11. The AUS\$16M **Pacific Ocean Litter Project**, funded by the Australian Government, will further progress the implementation of actions under the PMLAP by supporting national legislative instruments, increasing awareness of the need to reduce single use plastics by governments and business, and facilitating the adoption of sustainable alternative products and growing local enterprises that produce green products.

Recommendation

12. The Meeting is invited to:
 1. **note** the progress in developing and implementing the Pacific Regional Marine Action Plan by Pacific island Members and acknowledge the financial support provided by Australia to implement the Pacific Ocean Litter Project;
 2. **reaffirm commitment** to eliminate marine litter and recognise the urgency of implementing the marine litter action plan including the fast tracking of:
 - policies and actions to reduce plastic pollution that embrace whole of life cycle approaches to products, alternatives and consumption patterns;
 - enforcement and compliance of MARPOL provisions on vessels particularly fishing vessels and cruise ships; and
 - sustainability plans and actions for major events, including sporting events such as the Pacific Games, regional meetings such as the Forum Leaders Meeting and conferences such as the Our Oceans Conference.
 3. **reaffirm** the lead role of SPREP in implementation of the PMLAP in close collaboration with relevant regional agencies and partners in supporting Members to fast-track relevant policies and actions to implement the PMLAP.

7 August, 2019