

Eighteenth 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)

5 September 2025  
Apia Samoa

## **Introduction**

1. The Noumea Convention, negotiated under the framework of the Regional Seas Programme of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was adopted in 1986. The Convention and its two related Protocols- Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping and the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the South Pacific Region - entered into force on 22 August 1990.
2. The 12 Parties to the Convention are Australia, the Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, France, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands and United States.

## **Agenda Item 1: Opening of the meeting**

3. Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention met for their Eighteenth Ordinary Meeting on 5 September 2025.
4. New Zealand, Chair of the Seventeenth COP Meeting called the meeting to order. The Secretariat opened the meeting with a prayer.
5. The Deputy Director General of SPREP delivered the Opening Remarks highlighting the vital role of the Noumea Convention in addressing the growing environmental challenges. She also emphasised the continued relevance of the Convention in addressing these issues and the importance of deepening regional cooperation for greater impacts and long-lasting results. The valuable support of New Zealand and other partners in advancing the Noumea Convention was acknowledged. Noted that a key outcome of the Review of the Noumea Convention included a call to expand membership, acknowledging Tuvalu's intention to accede. To further strengthen the Convention's impact, a communications and finance strategy will be implemented to raise awareness and ensure long-term sustainability.

## **Agenda Item 2: Organisation of the meeting**

6. New Zealand, Chair of the Seventeenth COP informed the meeting that while a quorum had not been reached it was agreed that the business of the meeting would continue in line with the approach used for the 32<sup>nd</sup> SPREP Meeting. Present at the Meeting were representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, France, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, and Samoa.

7. In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention, a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson were elected from the representatives by consensus.

The Parties:

- 1) **Elected** Nauru as Chairperson and France as Vice-Chairperson

### **Agenda Item 3: Adoption of the Provisional Agenda**

8. The provisional agenda was presented and discussed by the Parties with amendments from the Secretariat.

The Parties:

- 1) **Adopted** the Provisional Agenda (attached as Agenda 3.1) with amendments.

### **Agenda Item 4.1: Report on the Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping (1990)**

9. The Secretariat provided an overview of the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in support of the Noumea Convention Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping, 1990 ("Dumping Protocol"), from July 2023 to June 2025.
10. New Zealand commended the Secretariat for the implementation of the Dumping Protocol for the past two years, including the technical assistance provided to countries, as well as the establishment of the Oil Spill Taskforce in the Marshall Islands and the rapid response to the oil spill in Majuro atoll and harbor. It was noted that these efforts reflect the growing regional capacity to respond to marine pollution and threats.
11. The role of the Secretariat's support during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting preparations in Samoa and the response to the Royal New Zealand Navy ship HMNZS Manawanui incident were acknowledged. New Zealand thanked the Government of Samoa for its continued leadership on its response.
12. New Zealand further conveyed appreciation to the United States Coast Guard and International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation (ITOPF) for its support to the Government of Samoa and response to the sinking of the Manawanui ship. Further noted the collaboration and cooperation of multiple agencies and organisations that provided their timely expertise to support the response efforts to minimise the impact on the environment.

The Parties:

- 1) **Noted** the Report on the Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping for the period July 2023 to June 2025.

## **Agenda Item 4.2: Secretariat's report on the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the Pacific Region**

13. The Secretariat provided an overview of the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in support of the Noumea Convention Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping, 1990 ("Dumping Protocol"), from July 2023 to June 2025.
14. Australia welcomed and supported the report. The Secretariat's efforts to link its work with the environment impact assessment process across different sectors and with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) was commended.

The Parties:

- 1) **Noted** the Report on the Protocol for the Prevention of Pollution of the South Pacific Region by Dumping for the period July 2023 to June 2025.

## **Agenda Item 4.3: Secretariat's report on activities undertaken in the biennium period of 2023-2025**

15. The Reports by the Secretariat were tabled in accordance with Rule 12 (vi) of the Rules of Procedure of the Noumea Convention highlighting work and activities implemented and carried out from the period of July 2023 to June 2025 in fulfilment of the obligations under the Noumea Convention.

The Parties:

- 1) **Adopted** the report of the Secretariat on the activities undertaken during the biennium period of July 2023 to June 2025.

## **Agenda Item 4.4: UNEP Regional Seas Programme**

16. The Secretariat presented an overview and update on its ongoing engagement in the UNEP Regional Seas Programme, outlining contributions and participation in key forums including the Twenty-Fourth Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Programme held in Nice, France.
17. The Secretariat provided an update on the activities implemented. The coordinated support provided by Council of the Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP) agencies for the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC) was noted with SPREP working with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and Pacific Community. The use of tools for environmental assessments was highlighted, through partnerships with the tourism sector, members, regional organisations, and other partners. The use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) as a tool for decision-making was also noted.

18. Australia requested further clarification on the work on invasive species. The Secretariat responded that interventions are provided through technical advice, as well as the recognition of the impacts of invasive species which are reflected in reports such as the State of Environment Report. It was noted that the invasives species work is aligned with Article 14 of the Noumea Convention.
19. France requested further information on the implementation of the Noumea Convention protocols on dumping and pollution, particularly in relation to collaboration with other organisations and the exchange of information.
20. The Secretariat responded by highlighting the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN) as a regional mechanism, including collaboration with the French Navy to strengthen regional oil spill capabilities. The Secretariat further noted its collaboration with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on work in the North Pacific in strengthening Dumping Protocols under the London Convention, as well as ongoing baseline studies to promote the London Convention and protocol in Member countries. It was further noted that work has also been strengthened on marine invasive species, with plans to replicate efforts in Fiji and Tonga on policy and action plans.

The Parties:

- 1) **Noted** the updates and activities undertaken by the Secretariat in the Regional Seas which supports the implementation of the Noumea Convention.

#### **Agenda Item 5: Country reports on the implementation of obligations under the Noumea Convention**

21. Country reports on national implementation of obligations by Parties to the Noumea Convention became standard agenda items at the Fourth Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Noumea Convention in 1998.
22. The opportunity was provided for Parties to report on the national implementation of their obligations under the Noumea Convention for the reporting period from July 2023 to June 2025.
23. Reports were received from Australia, France and New Zealand. Verbal updates were provided by Nauru and Marshall Islands. The Cook Islands and Samoa informed the meeting they would submit their written reports at a later date.
24. New Zealand provided a summary of its national report. It stated that its marine environment faces pressure from land- and sea-based activities, climate change, and non-indigenous species. Key updates since its last report included:
  - a. Legislative Reform: Updates to the litter act and waste minimization act to create a framework for extended producer responsibility and stronger compliance tools.

- b. New Funding Mechanisms: The establishment of the Contaminated Sites and Vulnerable Landfills Fund to address pollution risks, with an investment of approximately NZD 14 million in projects to reduce plastic and mismanaged waste.
- c. Climate Adaptation: Work continues under the national adaptation plan to address risks like coastal erosion and sea-level rise.
- d. Pollution Incidents: There were 107 oil spills reported, with most being minor. The Environmental Protection Authority also investigated 10 incidents involving harmful substances.
- e. Regional Cooperation: New Zealand continues to support SPREP's PacPLAN and PacPOL initiatives, including technical assistance to Samoa following a grounding incident.
- f. International Engagement: The country noted its disappointment that the final round of negotiations for an international treaty on plastic pollution did not reach a consensus. New Zealand remains committed to the High Ambition Coalition to end plastic pollution and has endorsed the Pacific Regional Declaration on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution.

25. Australia provided a summary of its report for the 2023-2025 period. It also noted it will be delivering its national state of the environment report next year. Key points included:

- a. Australia's commitment to protecting 30% of its marine environment in highly protected zoning by 2030.
- b. On the Minamata Convention, standards for mercury were added to the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard register in June 2024.
- c. In collaboration with SPREP under the Pacific Ocean Litter Project, Australia has been involved in coastal monitoring, education, and awareness-raising to phase out single-use plastics.
- d. Internationally, Australia is actively engaged in the CBD and the BBNJ treaty, which they are seeking to ratify as soon as possible.
- e. Australia noted its disappointment that a resolution was not reached at the recent plastics negotiations but remains committed to tackling pollution from plastics and land-based sources.
- f. Australia has released its Circular Economy Framework and noted that the "triple planetary crisis" cannot be tackled alone and that collaboration would be key in addressing this issue.

26. France provided an update, noting that the Noumea Convention provides a regular reporting expectation. It highlighted that most aspects of the report for New Caledonia are qualitative and include different levels of reporting (town, city, and state). Two specific interventions noted:

- a. The creation of a fund to finance "mini-activities and actions."
- b. The establishment of new regulations and standards, particularly for waste processing and controls marine waste from ships. These controls are carried out by marine affairs, and emergency plans are in place.

27. France further noted that Wallis and Futuna and French Polynesia, which represents two-thirds of the French exclusive economic zone in the Pacific, are working on this through the Noumea Convention with New Caledonia.
28. The Cook Islands noted its country report was a work in progress and would be submitted at a later date. It highlighted the recent activities relating to the implementation of the Noumea convention, including:
  - a. Active engagement in the BBNJ process with the Secretariat's support for capacity-building activities, specifically on transboundary waste.
  - b. The completion of a legacy waste program under GEF funding, which involved exporting 280,000 kgs of waste.
  - c. Ongoing community consultations to implement obligations under the CBD.
  - d. The strengthening of policies and regulations to ban single-use plastics.
29. Nauru provided an update on its activities noting a master plan on solid waste management developed under an ADB development project with resources from the GEF Islands project. It also noted the passing of a new littering regulation under the Environmental Climate Change Act, which recognises the synergies between the "triple planetary crisis" and a "one health" approach.
30. The Marshall Islands presented an update focusing on several key environmental initiatives and regulations which included legislative measures, strategic plans, and enforcement mechanisms aimed at protecting the marine environment and managing waste.
31. The Marshall Islands further noted that it has implemented targeted legislation to reduce plastic and styrofoam pollution, including the Styrofoam Cups and Plates and Plastic Product Prohibition Act. It has also introduced the Container Deposit Act 2016, which governs the importation and distribution of certain items, such as beverage bottles, and imposes penalties, including fines of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to six months. Repeat offenders face daily fines of \$10,000. Additionally, the Plastic Waste Law and the Waste and Pollutant Recycling Regulation of 2021 restrict disposal methods and reinforce the prohibition on single-use plastics. The Marshall Islands legal framework also includes:
  - a. Marine Water Quality Regulation of 1992: Provides a permitting system and standards for point-source discharges into marine waters and requires written approval for new or increased pollution projects.
  - b. The Marshall Islands EPA Strategic Plan 2023-2027 which emphasises integrated marine and terrestrial conservation, focusing on expanding Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), monitoring coral reefs, and improving waste and sanitation systems.
  - c. In collaboration with SPREP and the U.S. Coast Guard, a National Spill Response Plan has been drafted. This plan establishes a national framework for managing oil and chemical spills, defining institutional responsibilities and emergency protocols to strengthen monitoring and response to hazardous materials.

- d. The Marshall Islands has also acceded to international treaties such as the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), specifically the anti-fouling systems and bunker pollution conventions, and the 1996 Protocol to the London Dumping Convention concerning ocean dumping.
- e. The Marshall Islands has a defined framework for enforcement, which includes public education and the application of civil penalties. There is currently no publicly available enforcement data, but efforts are underway to collect it from various government agencies.
- f. For oil and chemical spills, minor incidents are more frequent than major ones. The response framework involves the Ministry of Transportation and Communication, the Marshall Islands Ports Authority, and the Marshall Islands Environmental Protection Authority. The latter two, along with the Marshall Islands Marine Resource Authority and masters of vessels, are required to report accidental spills of hazardous materials immediately—within 24 hours—and initiate mitigation efforts. Additionally, radioactive substances are considered hazardous materials and require prior approval from the Marshall Islands Environmental Protection Authority for storage or disposal that could lead to marine contamination.

32. Samoa informed the meeting its report for the July 2023 to June 2025 period will be submitted to the Secretariat at later date and further noted that the report will include waste management activities related to the "Greening of the CHOGM meeting" and the response to the HMNZS Manawanui waste incident.

The Parties:

- 1) **Tabled** their respective reports on the national implementation of their obligations under the Convention for the reporting period July 2023 to June 2025.

### **Agenda Item 6: Financial statements**

33. The Secretariat presented the Audited reports for SPREP and the Income and Expenditure reports for the Noumea Convention for the 2023 and 2024 financial years.

The Parties:

- 1) **Adopted** the Audited Reports for the Secretariat and the Income and Expenditure reports for the Noumea Convention for the 2023 and 2024 financial years.

### **Agenda Item 7.1 : The Noumea Convention Ad-Hoc Meeting Reports**

34. The outcomes of the Ad-Hoc Meetings of the Parties held in September 2024 and virtually on 21 May 2025 were presented to the meeting.

35. Australia provided insight to the 2023 meeting, thanked the Secretariat and acknowledged the usefulness of the intersessional meeting especially the interaction with Members.
36. France thanked the Secretariat for the enriching meeting especially the work of the Audit Committee. Highlighted that the Noumea Convention is very important to France and its French territories as it is undertaking a lot of work to implement the Convention including in partnership with the international community. France emphasised the importance of working together in parallel to implement activities of the Convention.

The Parties:

- 1) **Noted** the Reports of the Ad-Hoc Meetings.

### **Agenda Item 7.2 : The Noumea Convention Workplan and Budget**

37. The meeting considered the Noumea Convention Workplan and Budget. The Secretariat provided background on the development of the workplan and budget.
38. The Cook Islands extended its gratitude to the Government of Australia for the generous support provided in funding for the workplan and budget.
39. The Secretariat further noted its appreciation for the funding from the Government of Australia to help progress activities of the Noumea Convention. It was highlighted that the initial funding for this component was from the ACP MEA Phase 3 which shall conclude in December 2025.
40. The Secretariat indicated that it intends to continue with the key activities identified to increase awareness of the Noumea Convention and to ensure it aligns with multilateral environment agreements, and strengthen regional integration given the cross-cutting nature of the activities.
41. New Zealand expressed agreement with the workplan and budget item 3.1. However, expressed that the wording be without prejudice in changing the text of the Noumea Convention as this requires legislative amendments through parliament.
42. France thanked the Government of Australia for its invaluable contribution to the budget to enable the work of the Noumea Convention, noting its importance to the United Nations Environment Assembly.
43. The meeting sought clarification from the Secretariat on the endorsement of agenda items in relation to the quorum status of the meeting. The Secretariat informed the meeting for decisions to be made there must be two thirds of the Contracting Parties present. The Secretariat noted there are only seven Parties present and recommended the out-going Chairperson's proposition to take a pragmatic approach and that outcomes of the meeting be circulated to the Parties of the Convention for endorsement.

44. The Government of Australia indicated that they were happy to provide the support to continue the work captured in the workplan and budget. Australia remained engaged in the work and seeks to continue working with the Parties to seek future funding for the sustainability of the activities outlined in the workplan, budget and communication plan.

The Parties:

- 1) **Endorsed and approved** the Noumea Convention Workplan and Budget for the implementation of the Recommendations of the Convention Review.
- 2) **Acknowledged** the support from the Government of Australia in providing contribution to the workplan and budget 2025/2026.

### **Agenda Item 7.3: Proposed Improvements to PacPlan Delivery**

45. The meeting discussed in depth the revised approach to the implementation of the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Pollution Contingency Plan (PacPlan), under the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the South Pacific Region (the Emergencies Protocol).

46. The Secretariat presented an assessment of the similarities and differences between the Cartagena Convention, Caribbean Plan and PacPlan, along with a proposed reform programme for PacPlan to enhance its effectiveness. The review of the key elements of Caribbean arrangements suggests a list of suitable and sensible mechanisms that can be implemented by SPREP and PacPlan members, recognising the institutional and regional differences under the Noumea Convention. The proposed reform focuses on key actions related to governance and mandate, as well as long-term review (refer to WP 7.3 for proposed key actions).

47. The Secretariat further noted the key challenges highlighted in the proposed reform which included sustainable funding, governance, and strategic alignment with critical elements such as technical expertise, national-level political commitment, regional collaboration, and funding. A formal process is also required for future planning by the committee.

48. New Zealand welcomed and supported the proposed PacPlan reform, encouraging the paper to reflect International Maritime Organization involvement and diverse funding sources.

49. France emphasised that all four key elements are essential to the reform and noted that this new exercise entails additional costs and stressed the importance of proceeding systematically.

The Parties:

- 1) **Endorsed and approved** the proposed improvements to the way the PacPlan arrangements are governed, planned, delivered and implemented;
- 2) **Endorsed** the PacPlan arrangements implemented to deliver the Noumea Convention Emergencies Protocol tool to deliver regional requires the following reforms in Principle, with operational and administrative details to be worked out:
  - i. Establishment of a PacPlan Steering Committee comprised of Noumea Protocol Parties and PacPlan Member countries;
  - ii. A draft Terms of Reference for that Steering Committee be developed by SPREP and further developed and agreed by the Steering Committee for COP19 endorsement;

- iii. The functions and responsibilities of the Steering Committee to include the development of a PacPlan Strategic Plan for implementation by Members and SPREP.

**Agenda Item 7.4 : Strategic importance and complementarity of the Noumea Convention to the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions (BBNJ Agreement)**

- 50. The meeting discussed the strategic importance and complementarity of the Noumea Convention to the BBNJ Agreement.
- 51. The meeting encouraged the Parties (Fiji, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands) to support national ratification of the BBNJ Agreement recognising the strategic importance to the Noumea Convention and its complementarity.
- 52. New Zealand thanked the Secretariat for the work on this and views outlined on further consideration of linkages between the two agreements. Noted the recent ratifications from the region and confirmed that it is on track to ratify the BBNJ Agreement in 2026.
- 53. Australia recognised the synergies between the two agreements in relation to areas of high seas pockets and encouraged eligible countries to ratify the Noumea Convention. It was confirmed that they are seeking to ratify the BBNJ Agreement as soon as possible and will be developing domestic legislation to enable effective national implementation of the Agreement. It was noted that Australia had co-chaired the PrepComm for the BBNJ Agreement and consider it a feat and milestone for the protection of our ocean.
- 54. The meeting emphasised the need for continued work with partners to build a shared understanding of the treaty to support ratification and implementation. It also recognised the contribution of the BBNJ Treaty to the broader work under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on marine conservation and food security in our region.
- 55. France highlighted complementarity between the Noumea Convention and the BBNJ Agreement and further highlighted the importance of having continuity of the region's exclusive economic zones with the region's high seas pockets. France encouraged Pacific BBNJ Parties to ratify the Noumea Convention to increase complementarity and linkages between the two agreements.

The Parties:

- 1) **Considered** and **noted** the synergies and strategic importance of the Noumea Convention to the BBNJ Agreement;
- 2) **Encouraged** the Parties and Partners to support the Secretariat in strengthening regional coordination of the BBNJ Agreement and integration into regional frameworks;
- 3) **Recognised** the Secretariat's engagement with the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC) and OneCROP to facilitate the national ratification and implementation of the BBNJ Agreement; and
- 4) **Encouraged** non-Parties to ratify the Noumea Convention as a regional instrument to strengthen regional cooperation in tackling environmental issues that transcend national jurisdictions.

## **Agenda Item 8: Consideration and adoption of the Core Budget 2026-2027**

56. The Secretariat presented the Core Budget for 2026–2027 under the Noumea Convention.

57. Australia expressed its support for the recommendation and urged all parties to support SPREP's activities for the Convention, consistent with past support provided through the ACPMEA project. Australia highlighted UNEA-7 as an upcoming opportunity for Parties to advocate for long-term funding for the Convention, and further emphasised the need to work collectively to identify sustainable funding options that would enable the Secretariat to continue delivering support to the Parties.

58. The status of Parties' contributions to the Convention was outlined in WP8.2.

The Parties:

- 1) **considered and approved** the core budget and contributions for the biennium 2026–2027; and
- 2) **committed** to urgent clearance of outstanding contributions.

## **Agenda Item 9: Other Business**

59. France informed the meeting that the report of New Caledonia had been completed and had been submitted to the Secretariat and requested that it be uploaded to the SPREP website as part of the working papers and reports submitted for the Eighteenth Meeting of the Noumea Convention.

## **Agenda item 10: Date and venue of the next meeting**

The Parties:

- 1) **Endorsed** the Nineteenth meeting of the Noumea Convention to be hosted in 2027, prior to the Thirty-third SPREP Meeting as the date of the next meeting and the venue as Samoa.

## **Agenda item 11: Adoption of the meeting record**

The Contract Parties present at the Meeting:

- 1) **Adopted** the Outcomes Report of the Eighteenth Meeting of the Noumea Convention that will be circulated for acceptance by Parties not present.

## **Agenda item 12: Closure of the meeting**

60. The meeting closed with remarks of appreciation from the Deputy Director General and a prayer from the Secretariat at 2.50pm Samoa time.

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