PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
INDUSTRY STANDARD 2.0

Standards and Certification Programme

for Phasing Out Single-Use Plastics in the Pacific Islands Tourism Industry

PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT

PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION

PACIFIC OCEAN LITTER PROJECT

Australian Aid

SPREP
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

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Acronyms

COTM	Council of Tourism Ministers
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CSOs	CIvil Society Organisations
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
GTPI	Global Tourism Plastics Initiative
INC-4	4th Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution
MLAP	Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan 2018-2025
MNPs	Micro- and Nano- Plastics
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTOs	National Tourism Organisations
PICs	Pacific Island Countries
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
POLP	Pacific Ocean Litter Project 2019-2027
PSTIS	Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard
PSTPF	2030 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPTO	Pacific Tourism Organisation
SUPs	Single-Use Plastics
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

Message From SPTO Chief Executive Officer

CHRISTOPHER COCKER
Chief Executive Officer
SPTO

Warm Pacific Greetings!

The tourism sector is a pivotal economic contributor for our Pacific communities, driving job creation and foreign investment. Recovery appears promising; however, it places pressure on our natural environment. Effective waste management and pollution control are essential, as a clean environment is crucial for the success of our tourism sector. I express my support for Pacific leaders advocating for a comprehensive lifecycle approach that emphasises prevention and reduction strategies for eliminating plastic pollution, as articulated in the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution, reaffirming our commitment to the regional strategy, Cleaner Pacific 2025.

Tourism significantly contributes to waste management challenges in the Pacific, emphasising the Pacific Tourism Organisation's (SPTO) role in advancing regional initiatives for cleaner coastal environments. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent recognises the interlinkages between economic development, our oceans and environment. At sector level, the 2030 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) provides guidance for elevating and aligning sustainable tourism priorities and actions with broader aspirations. Notably, Goal 4 of the PSTPF explicitly addresses the issue of plastic waste and advocates prevention and avoidance as its most effective control measures. Additionally, it emphasises the necessity of implementing strategies to phase out undesirable products, and influencing a shift in behaviour.

The Standards and Ceritification Programme for Phasing Out Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) in the Pacific Islands Tourism Industry serves as a comprehensive resource for industry stakeholders and nations aiming to eliminate SUPs. They establish a benchmark and offer valuable recommendations, considerations, and actions that tourism enterprises can utilise to assess their current operations and align with good practice examples. They correspond to and enhance the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, as well as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria for Hotels, Destinations, and Tour Operators. The standards support a diverse range of industry stakeholders, from established enterprises to newcomers. The framework addresses the needs of both large and small to medium-sized businesses, ensuring practicality. In addition to the certification framework, an implementation toolkit is available to help nations and industry stakeholders adopt sustainable practices.

On behalf of SPTO, I commend the unwavering dedication and commitment of all stakeholders involved in the development of the standards, framework and toolkit. I also express our profound gratitude to the Australian Government and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) for funding support. We look forward to continuing this partnership through the implementation of the Standards and Certification Programme across our Pacific Islands.

It is imperative that all tourism operators, industry partners, communities and visitors actively collaborate and fully embrace the principles outlined in the standards and framework. I strongly urge government stakeholders and partners to unite in advancing the objectives of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, including those to phaseout SUPs in the Pacific tourism industry.

Malo 'aupito

Message From SPREP Director General

SEFANAIA NAWADRA
Director General
SPREP

Bula Vinaka & Talofa Lava

The Standards and Certification Programme for Phasing Out SUPs in the Pacific Islands Tourism Industry marks a significant milestone in the Pacific's journey toward sustainable development and environmental stewardship. Integrated within the PSTPF, they embody the commitment of Pacific Island nations to address the impacts of the triple planetary crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, affecting our people and communities.

As tourism represents a crucial economic sector, it must balance its growth with a responsibility to protect the unique and fragile ecosystems that define our identity. To this end, I wish to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of SPTO and wider Pacific tourism sector and partners in advancing this programme.

SPREP, through the Australian Government funded Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP), is delighted to have supported SPTO in the development of the standards for phasing out SUPs in the Pacific tourism sector.

The collaboration between our regional organisations represents a targeted response to our shared strategic priority of sustaining and building a resilient Pacific environment.

The growing environmental challenges posed by plastic pollution — particularly in coastal and island communities — demand immediate and collective action. For the Pacific, marine litter and plastic pollution are covered in the Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan (MLAP) 2018-2025, which is a subset of the Cleaner Pacific 2025 strategy.

The standards, which have been developed in consultation with the tourism sector, including industry, is complemented by a certification framework and implementation toolkit for business operators, which SPREP also supported through POLP.

This initiative represents a bold and necessary commitment to protect our environment, safeguard our oceans, and build a more resilient, sustainable future for the tourism industry. Together, we can ensure that tourism remains a force for good while preserving our natural beauty that travellers seek to experience.

I commend SPTO for its partnership and invite partners to support the work ahead.

Sa vinaka saka

Background

As a key economic sector, tourism benefits from a cleaner environment, but it also puts pressure on the environment, oceans and its resources. Endorsed by Pacific Island tourism leaders in 2021, the 2030 PSTPF sets out four high-level goals for sustainable tourism development for the Pacific. Goal 4 of the PSTPF recognises the importance of healthy islands and oceans, and this includes priorities on waste management. The *Standards and Certification Programme for Phasing Out SUPs in the Pacific Islands Tourism Industry* builds on Criterion 4.2, relating to sustainable purchasing, and Criterion 4.9, relating to solid waste, within the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard (PSTIS).

The need for a more sustainable form of tourism in the Pacific has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has altered the expectations of travellers and host communities and how businesses conduct their operations. Endorsed by the Council of Tourism Ministers (COTM) in October 2021, the PSTPF envisions that SPTO and its partners will lead by example on a global scale and demonstrate their commitment to sustainable tourism as the industry recovers from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The vision for our Pacific Islands is to ensure:

> *"We are empowered by and benefitting from tourism that is resilient, prosperous and inclusive. It improves the wellbeing of our communities and protects, restores and promotes our cultures, islands and ocean ecosystems."*

The PSTPF highlights the importance of shifting towards sustainable destination planning and management and tourism business practices that support prosperous and resilient economies. To this end, the PSTPF recommended that SPTO develop the PSTIS with and for member countries based on the globally recognised sustainable tourism standards established by the GSTC.

Regional Responses To Legally-binding Plastic Pollution Pact

Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have strongly advocated for a legally-binding global treaty to address plastic pollution, recognising its existential threat to ecosystems, economies, and social well-being. At the 5th France-Oceania Summit (July 2021), Pacific leaders highlighted:

> *"...plastic pollution's disproportionate impact on the Pacific Ocean and Pacific Island Countries in general, particularly considering they do not extract fossil fuels nor produce plastics and their additives, we support a decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations of a global plastic binding agreement..."*

Later, during the Environment Ministers' High-Level Talanoa (September 2021), PICs endorsed the Pacific Regional Declaration on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution, calling for a lifecycle approach, national plans, pollution elimination targets, and reduced virgin plastic production.

At the 4th Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting (INC-4, April 2024) in Ottawa, Canada, PICs emphasised binding obligations covering the entire lifecycle of plastics, including legacy plastics, and advocated for mechanisms to remediate existing plastic pollution, especially in areas beyond national jurisdiction. They highlighted that voluntary measures have failed and emphasised the imperative to address plastic pollution entering the region via trade, tourism, fishing and maritime sectors, and atmospheric and tidal flows.

Commitment by PICs was further demonstrated at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum (PIF, November 2023) in the Cook Islands, where some leaders encouraged membership

to the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution: a group of nations that are committed to an ambitious global plastics treaty based on a comprehensive full lifecycle approach. The Pacific Partnerships for Prosperity initiative, aligned with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, underscores the region's dedication to addressing plastic pollution at national and international levels, including the promotion of sustainable solutions for environmental and economic resilience.

Regional Partnership To Advance Action

In alignment with this outcome and the PSTPF, SPREP has collaborated with SPTO to jointly implement activities to reduce SUPs across the tourism industry in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs). The target tourism sub-sectors include accommodation, food and beverage, tour operators, event management, cruise lines and airlines.

Funded by the Australian Government and implemented by SPREP in collaboration with PICTs, the POLP (2019-2027) is working to reduce SUP marine litter in Pacific coastal environments. It has been developed in recognition of the threat marine litter poses to the environment, public health, and economic development of the region. The POLP reflects the regional objectives of PICTs, of which many have implemented bans or levies to reduce SUPs. At the 48th PIF Leaders Meeting (2017) in Samoa, it was agreed to fast-track the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastic bags and plastic and polystyrene packaging. Pacific leaders reaffirmed this commitment in 2018 by recognising the urgency of implementing the Pacific Regional Action Plan: Marine Litter (2018-2025).

With the long-term goal of cleaner Pacific coastal environments, the POLP also embeds and directly contributes to the policy objectives of PICTs as stated in the Cleaner Pacific 2025 strategy. Outcome 3 of the POLP is the adoption of plastic reduction measures by target sectors, companies and businesses. By design, the target sectors, companies, and businesses are tourism and takeaway food and beverage.

To implement the project's outcome, SPREP has collaborated with SPTO to support the research, design, development, implementation and monitoring of a dedicated programme to phaseout SUPs targeting tourism businesses. The programme aims to contribute to the following intermediate outcomes:

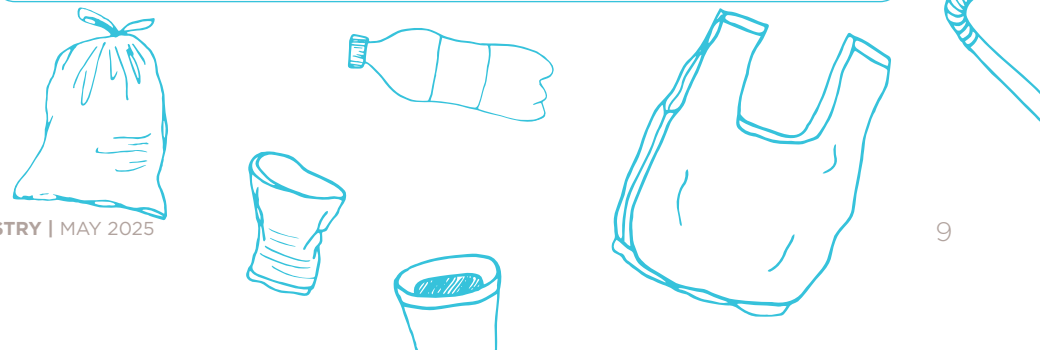
- Target sectors, companies and businesses are aware of alternative products.
- Information on alternative approaches (products/methods) is accessible.

The programme comprises three components:

- Standards for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs (hereon referred to as the Standards)
- Certification Framework for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs: A Decade of Action (hereon referred to as the Certification Framework)
- Implementation Toolkit for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs (hereon referred to as the Toolkit)

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC WITHIN THIS CONTEXT

Single-use plastic(s), or SUP(s), refer to non-durable plastic items designed to be discarded after one brief use or short lifespans, often ending up as waste or pollution. This includes problematic and unnecessary plastics that are non-reusable, non-recyclable, or contain hazardous chemicals, as defined by the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative.



Standards

The Standards is a set of ambitious goals and responses to phasing out SUPs in the Pacific tourism industry. It provides a clear framework for national tourism organisations (NTOs) and businesses to assess their current performance and progressively improve their sustainability practices. It sits within the PSTIS, specifically supporting Criteria 4.2 and 4.9 of the regional tourism standards and is closely aligned with the GSTC criteria.

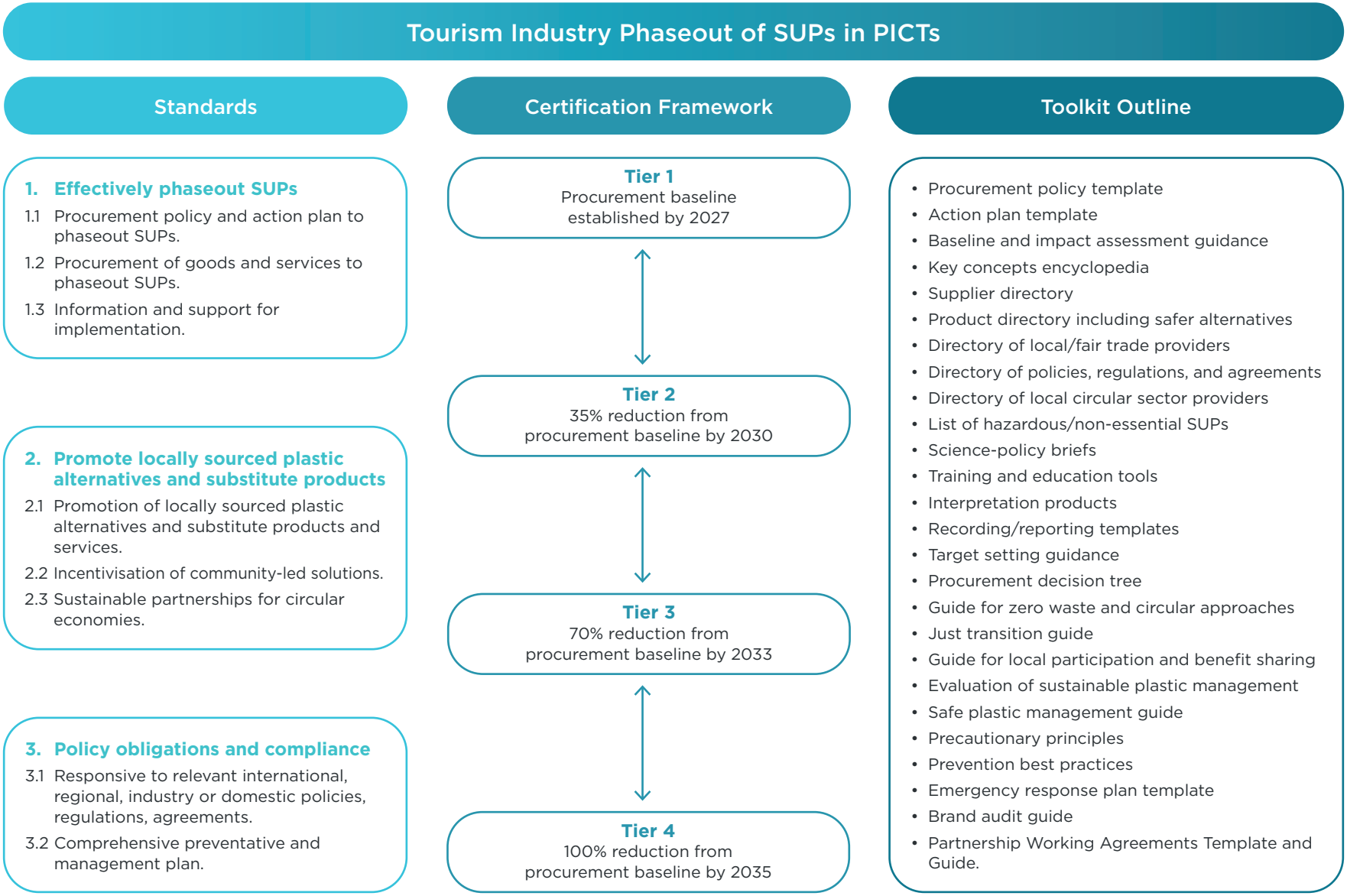
Certification Framework

The Certification Framework is a Decade of Action developed in conjunction with the Standards and Toolkit. It sets the foundation for tourism businesses and organisations to tailor their own national certification programmes, and serve as a platform for progressing to international certification benchmarks. The framework also incorporates a timeline for progressive achievements intended to guide businesses and destinations in establishing a baseline, ultimately aiming to phaseout 100% of the identified baseline.

Toolkit

The Toolkit will support the implementation of the Standards and Certification Framework. It provides resources, good practice examples, guidance, templates, and other tools to enable all tourism businesses and organisations to implement the criteria and advance the proposed four tiers of the Certification Framework to achieve and sustain the goal of 100% reduction of SUPs. The Toolkit will be hosted online with the aim of supporting widespread access for all businesses and stakeholders. An online presence will also allow easy maintenance and updating of the toolkit as more relevant and up-to-date tools become available.

Figure 1. The Standards, Certification Framework, and Toolkit form an integrated foundation to phaseout SUPs in the Pacific Islands tourism industry.



Standards for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs

PREAMBLE

The Standards sit within the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard, which along with the Destination Standard, provides guidance to SPTO and its member countries to work towards improved sustainability in tourism as required by the PSTPF.

Objective Of The Standards

The Standards aims to:

- provide direction and guidance to develop and implement national standards for SUP phaseouts for SPTO member countries by acting as a benchmark for the tourism industry to assess current performance and to progressively build upon in areas requiring further development over time.
- support member countries and their tourism sector in becoming more sustainable through public and private sector partnerships and action.
- create awareness and encourage visitors to travel responsibly.

These set of standards will be a tool for the Pacific tourism industry to inform their approach to improving sustainable practices by phasing out non-essential SUPs (see Appendix A: Glossary). Not all the standards will be relevant to all tourism businesses and organisations, and not all businesses will be able to implement the recommended responses. The Standards aim to provide guidance to governments, tourism organisations, civil society organisations (CSOs), communities and funding partners on the ambitious goals and responses of the tourism industry in relation to phasing out SUPs in the Pacific region. Additionally, the standards are high level and do not specifically provide guidance on how to set and meet procurement targets. However, the Certification Framework and Toolkit will support the transition.

Who Can Use The Standards?

The Standards have been designed for tourism enterprises in PICTs. These may be individual businesses, but may also be other forms of facility, operation and undertaking. For example, they could include museums, festivals, public buildings and monuments, not only commercial businesses, such as accommodation, tour operators or paid attractions. Together, the Standards, Certification Framework, and Toolkit (see Figure 1) provide a complete foundation necessary to phaseout SUPs in the Pacific tourism sector.

How Can The Standards Be Used?

The Standards provide an ambitious benchmark for the tourism industry of PICTs and are designed for the tourism industry to build upon and strengthen as appropriate. The suggested implementation responses ('ways standards could be addressed') are a list of potential circumstances, factors, evidence, and actions to look for in a tourism enterprise in assessing alignment with the PSTIS and the GSTC criteria. They are also closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Standards are intentionally aligned with the GSTC sustainable industry criteria (see Appendix B). The GSTC criteria are organised around four main themes: sustainable management, socio-economic impacts, cultural impacts, and environmental impacts. The relevant GSTC criteria are indicated in the Standards for reference.

Alignment of all the criteria in the existing PSTIS, including the newly proposed Standards, enables the amended Industry Standard to be recognised by the GSTC in the future. GSTC-Recognised Standards are sustainable tourism standards that adhere, and are equivalent, to the GSTC criteria.

Structure Of The Standards

The Standards correspond to and build on the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry and Destination Standards and recommendations for action and GSTC Criteria (Hotels, Destination, Tour Operators). Its three topics correspond to the goals of the PSTPF: 1) SUPs phaseouts; 2) Locally sourced products; and 3) Policy obligations and compliance. The Standards set the expectations, and the implementation recommendations indicate what is needed to meet those criteria. The Standards are designed to guide procurement for regenerative and restorative circularity, including considerations for safe and sustainable use, handling, and management when phasing out SUPs. The Standards also include awareness raising and education for staff, visitors, supply chain actors, and stakeholders to encourage support for the Standards and its successful implementation and outcomes.

Application Of The Standards

The Standards have been designed for a range of destinations and industry settings, regardless of whether tourism as a sector is established or emerging, and on balance, accounts for the needs and capacity of large and small to medium enterprises. Not all standards will be applicable in all situations. In particular, the application of the standards will be influenced by the type of tourism product, the scale and scope of each business and the local regulatory, environmental, social, economic or cultural conditions, all of which affect the extent to which a business can achieve the criteria.

Who Is Responsible For Implementing The Standards?

The PSTPF calls on all partners and stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate to advance the vision for sustainable tourism through a series of policies and actions. Responsibility for the implementation of the PSTPF and PSTIS, including the Standards, does not necessarily reside with one organisation or sector but rather requires partnership and collaboration with stakeholders across government, industry, civil society organisations, development partners and the community.

Successful implementation will require the commitment of ongoing financial and technical resources at national, regional, and international levels, mobilisation of which will require cross-sectoral collaboration between PICTs, development and trading partners, and the governing bodies of regional and international policies and agreements. Successful implementation will also require policy integration across government bodies and robust compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

The Standards has the potential to empower Pacific communities to benefit from tourism, ensure Pacific cultures remain strong, and support healthy populations, islands, and ocean ecosystems.

Review Of The Standards

SPTO will periodically review the Standards or as GSTC criteria are updated (whichever comes first). SPTO welcomes feedback from member countries to provide comments on the PSTIS, including the new Standards for phasing out SUPs at any time.

Standards For Tourism Industry Phaseout Of SUPs In PICTs

PSTPF PRIORITY	TOPIC	STANDARD	WAYS STANDARD COULD BE ADDRESSED	GSTC STANDARDS
Repurpose Tourism to Deliver Greater Benefits to Pacific Communities **Protect Our Islands, Coastal and Ocean Ecosystems** **Build Resilience to Climate Change and Transition to A Low Emission, Resource Efficient Sector** **Protect and Promote Our Cultures** **Tourism Delivers Greater Benefits to Communities**	SUP Phaseouts	1. Procurement policy and action plan to phaseout SUPs 2. Procurement of goods and services to phase out SUPs 3. Information and support for implementation	1. A procurement policy and action plan is in place to phaseout SUPs, including self-determined time-bound targets that: • Are guided by essential use criteria, precautionary and prevention principles, the zero-waste hierarchy, and just transition, and take a full lifecycle approach. • Aim for safe and sustainable plastics and the safe and sustainable waste management of essential plastics. • Are reviewed and updated regularly. • Promote the phaseout of SUP products and packaging. 2. The business carefully manages the procurement of goods and services to phaseout SUPs by: • Maintaining a directory of suppliers offering the safest, most sustainable products, packaging and services. • Prioritising local plastic-free suppliers and suppliers with sustainability certification. • Considering the full life cycle of the product, including local conditions, contexts, and infrastructure, before purchasing any plastic product or substitute. • Sourcing non-plastic substitutes (e.g. ground nut shells, coconut husk powder, sea salt, coffee, oatmeal, or pumice) for products containing intentionally added micro- and nano-plastics (MNPs). • Sourcing products, service providers, and operators with similar zero-plastic pollution goals. • Selecting certified products (environmental, fair trade, organic) where available. • Selecting durable essential plastic products that minimise wear and tear, reducing the generation of MNPs. • Avoiding non-essential plastic products or packaging.	A.4 A.3 B1 B3 B6 D1.1 D1.2 D1.3 D2.4 D2.5 D2.6

PSTPF PRIORITY	TOPIC	STANDARD	WAYS STANDARD COULD BE ADDRESSED	GSTC STANDARDS
			3. The business ensures that staff, suppliers, and visitors understand the importance of the policy and plan and have the information and support to implement it, including an education plan that: • Provides information about the adverse effects of the types and forms of plastics. • Educates staff on plastic waste minimisation and safe and sustainable management practices. • Inform all personnel about the sources, risks, and mitigation of MNPs and plastic chemicals. • Provides relevant plastic pollution prevention information and guidance to visitors and suppliers.	

PSTPF PRIORITY	TOPIC	STANDARD	WAYS STANDARD COULD BE ADDRESSED	GSTC STANDARDS
Repurpose Tourism to Deliver **Greater Benefits to Pacific Communities** **Protect and Promote our Cultures** **Strengthen social inclusion Enable Prosperous Cultural and Creative Industries**	Locally sourced products	1. Promotion of locally sourced plastic alternatives and substitute products and services 2. Incentivisation of community-led solutions 3. Sustainable partnerships for circular economies	1. The business policy and plan promote locally sourced plastic alternatives and substitute products and services by: • Maintaining and regularly reviewing a record of locally owned and fair-trade producers and providers. • Considering potential impacts on natural resources and communities. • Protecting intellectual property rights and the rights of communities and individuals • Ensuring full and meaningful public participation in the development and implementation of the business' policy and plan. • Seeking prior informed consent and guidance from local community leaders, obtaining community feedback and taking corrective actions. • Ensuring plastic pollution prevention and mitigation activities do not interfere with community and other businesses' access to natural resources, and health and sanitation services. • Supporting community plastic pollution prevention initiatives, clean-ups and other mitigation activities. 2. The business incentivises community-led plastic-free nature-based solutions by: • Creating opportunities to learn from local communities. • Promoting locally owned, made, and sourced plastic-free products, packaging, and services to visitors. • Encouraging visitors to support community plastic-free initiatives. 3. The business forges sustainable partnerships in the form of Working Agreements or similar, between tourism industry associations (national and regional) and government departments for circular economies.	B1 B2 B3 B4 B6 B8 B9 C2 D1.1 D1.2 D2.4

PSTPF PRIORITY	TOPIC	STANDARD	WAYS STANDARD COULD BE ADDRESSED	GSTC STANDARDS
Enabling Legislation and Policies **Sustainable Management**	Policy obligations and compliance	1. Responsive to relevant international, regional, national or industry policies, regulations, and agreements. 2. Comprehensive preventative and management plan.	1. The business responds effectively to relevant international, regional, industry, and domestic policies and agreements and is compliant with relevant regulations by ensuring compliance with local, regional, and international plastics regulations and agreements. 2. The business has a comprehensive plan to prevent contamination from SUPs, including: • Integrating circular economy, precautionary and prevention principles. • Establishing emergency response plans and protocols. • Ensuring protocols are in place for the safe onsite handling and storage of plastics. • Ensuring essential plastics are safely and sustainably managed off-site.	A1 A2 A3 A6 A7.2 A7.3 C2 D2.3 D2.4 D2.5 D2.6

Certification Framework for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs

PREAMBLE

The Certification Framework is a 10-Year Plan of Action that has been designed alongside the Standards and Toolkit to provide a complete foundation necessary to phaseout procurements of non-essential and hazardous SUPs in the Pacific tourism industry.

Overview Of The Certification Framework

The Certification Framework outlines an effective procurement certification scheme to phaseout SUPs in PICTs. While the definition of SUPs within the context of the Certification Framework has been outlined, definitions of SUPs should align with existing national policies and regulations on plastic reduction to ensure consistency and compliance and to provide clear benchmarks for the tourism sector to phaseout SUP procurement.

National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) may collaborate with national and regional certification providers to develop tailored certification schemes that prioritise the elimination of non-essential, hazardous, and unsustainable SUPs from land, air, and sea operations and the phasing out of all SUPs in the tourism sector. The framework ensures a structured, transparent, measurable, reportable, safe, equitable, and sustainable approach advancing environmental stewardship and fostering sustainable tourism practices across the Pacific region.

Purpose Of The Certification Framework

The Certification Framework is vital for countries and the tourism industry because it:

Provides structured guidance
The Certification Framework outlines a clear, tiered pathway for countries to consider in the design of their own certification schemes.

Offers an inclusive framework
The Certification Framework for phasing out procurement of SUPs is designed to enable all tourism enterprises (small, medium, and large) to meet tiered SUP phaseout targets.

Supports national certification programmes
The Certification Framework serves as a foundational document for countries to design their own national certification schemes, or to integrate elements of the framework within existing programmes in alignment with the Standards.

Promotes locally sourced products
The Certification Framework promotes locally sourced and produced products including sustainable plastic alternatives and substitutes.

Encourages sustainable development
The Certification Framework contributes to healthier, and more sustainable communities, ecosystems, and economies.

Supports policy obligations and compliance
The Certification Framework supports countries to meet obligations and compliance with international, regional, national and industry policies, regulations, and agreements.

Who Is The Certification Framework For?

The Certification Framework is primarily intended for NTOs, government bodies and relevant local certification authorities/agencies responsible for establishing and overseeing certification schemes.

Countries, particularly their NTOs, are encouraged to use this framework to create national SUP procurement certification schemes tailored to their specific tourism industries and environmental, geographic, economic, and social contexts and conditions. When designing national certification schemes, the following should be considered:

Stakeholder involvement
NTOs are encouraged to engage tourism businesses, government agencies, local communities, and development partners early in the process to ensure broad support and successful implementation.

Contextual adaptation
While the Certification Framework provides a common structure, each country should adjust the implementation process, timeframe, and reporting mechanisms based on local conditions, including available resources and regulatory environments.

Sustainability goals
National certification schemes should aim to contribute to broader environmental, economic, and social goals, including providing guidance on safe and sustainable alternatives, preferred local suppliers, and why safe and sustainable procurements are key to plastic pollution prevention.

Why Tourism Businesses Should Join National Certification Schemes To Phaseout SUPs?

Joining national certification schemes for phasing out SUPs as guided by the Certification Framework offers significant advantages for tourism businesses, enabling them to enhance competitiveness and consumer trust, protect people and the environment, reduce risk and costs, and support local economies. The following points highlight the key benefits of participating in such schemes:

Competitive advantage
Certified tourism businesses gain a marketing edge by demonstrating their commitment to product safety and sustainability and attract eco-conscious travellers. Clean, safe, plastic-free island environments attract all tourist types.

Protecting people
Phasing out SUPs promotes customer care and worker protection by reducing exposure to harmful plastics and chemicals, improving overall human health and safety.

Protecting the environment
By phasing out SUPs, tourism businesses contribute to cleaner beaches, healthier oceans, rivers, lakes, air, soils, and food systems, and reduced pressure on local waste management systems.

Cost savings
Transitioning away from SUPs leads to long-term operational cost reductions and improved resource efficiency, e.g. transitioning away from SUPs and to safe and sustainable reusable systems.

Supporting local suppliers
Participating businesses can support local economies and resilience as well as food safety and sovereignty by engaging with local suppliers to source safe and sustainable, locally sourced and produced SUP alternatives and substitutes.

Structure Of The Certification Framework

The Certification Framework is designed within the context of an Improver Programme. This is critical as most businesses in the region are mostly micro, small, and medium enterprises. It also recognises that the phaseout process is not an overnight change. To this end, the Certification Framework is focused on nationally driven programmes and not third-party certification. Countries and businesses that are ready for those programmes are encouraged to continue down that pathway; however, it will be important to connect their efforts to national initiatives.

NTOs (or relevant certifying agencies) as the certifying bodies will establish the national certification schemes guided by the Certification Framework. The Certification Framework is structured around a four-tiered system, designed to guide tourism businesses through a progressive reduction of SUPs until they attain 100% reduction of SUP procurements from initial baselines. This approach ensures that businesses of all sizes and capacities can engage with the certification scheme at a level suited to their current technical, financial and resource capacity and capabilities, while providing clear pathways for advancement.

The Toolkit supports the implementation of the Certification Framework by providing resources, good practice examples, guidance, templates, and other tools. These resources enable tourism businesses and organisations to effectively implement the standards and progress through the four tiers of the Certification Framework, ultimately achieving and sustaining the goal of 100% reduction in SUPs.

Certification Framework Decade Of Action

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	TIER 4
Procurement baseline established by 2027	**35% Reduction from procurement baseline achieved by 2030**	**70% Reduction from procurement baseline achieved by 2033**	**100% Reduction by 2035**
☐ Policy established.	☐ Business's internal review of policy, which now includes provisions for education, awareness and partnership opportunities.	☐ Business's internal review of the updated policy to include successful awareness campaigns and signed partnership agreements.	☐ Business's internal review and improvement of updated policy to maintain zero-SUP procurement status.
☐ Action plan established.	☐ The business's internal review of an action plan, which now includes provisions for education, awareness, and partnership opportunities.	☐ Business's internal review of the updated action plan to include successful awareness campaigns and signed partnership agreements.	☐ Business's internal review and improvement of the updated action plan to maintain a zero-SUP procurement status.
☐ The business's internal directory of preferred suppliers has been established.	☐ The business's internal directory of preferred suppliers is assessed and approved by the national certifying body.	☐ The business's internal updated directory of preferred suppliers is reviewed and approved by the national certifying body.	☐ Business's internal updated directory of preferred suppliers reviewed and approved by the national certifying body.
☐ Baseline of the SUP procurement set.	☐ Evidence of a minimum 35% reduction of SUP procurement.	☐ Evidence of a minimum 70% reduction of SUP procurement.	☐ Evidence of a minimum 100% reduction of SUP procurement.
☐ SUP reduction target of 35% set.	☐ SUP reduction target of 70% set.	☐ SUP reduction target of 100% set.	☐ Education and awareness implementation and reporting to sustain zero-SUP practices
	☐ Drafts of partnership agreements, including documentation of Free Prior Informed Consent, are shared with the certifying body for review.	☐ Education and awareness reporting.	☐ Action plan reporting mechanisms reviewed and approved by the certifying body to ensure compliance with the zero-SUP procurement status
		☐ Action plan reporting mechanisms are reviewed and approved by the national certifying body.	☐ Partnership reporting.
		☐ Signed partnership agreements, including Free Prior Informed Consent.	☐ Review and renew partnership agreements, including Free Prior Informed Consent

The Role Of The Certifying Body

NTOs or relevant certifying agencies will serve as the certifying bodies responsible for establishing and overseeing national certification schemes. These certifying bodies play a critical role in ensuring the successful implementation of the Certification Framework. Their responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Designing national certification schemes**
   In consultation with stakeholders, develop tailored certification programmes aligned with the Certification Framework, taking into account local environmental, economic, and social contexts.
2. **Setting certification criteria**
   Define the specific requirements and benchmarks for each tier of the certification process.
3. **Reviewing and approving applications**
   Evaluate evidence submitted by tourism businesses to verify compliance with the certification criteria for each tier.
4. **Monitoring and compliance**
   Conduct regular and frequent reviews to ensure businesses maintain their certification status and continue to meet the required standards.
5. **Providing guidance and support**
   Provide technical assistance, resources, and tools to help businesses understand and meet certification requirements.
6. **Promoting stakeholder engagement**
   Facilitate collaboration between tourism businesses, government agencies, local communities, and development partners to ensure broad support and successful implementation.
7. **Ensuring transparency and accountability**
   Maintain clear and transparent processes for certification, including documentation, reporting, and communication with stakeholders.

The Four Certification Tiers

Tier 1: Procurement baseline established by 2027
To achieve Tier 1, businesses must complete the following actions:

1. **Policy established**
   Establish a business-specific policy outlining the commitment to align SUP procurement with Tier 1 requirements, with subsequent targets to progress to Tier 2 by 2030, Tier 3 by 2033, and Tier 4 by 2035.
2. **Action plan established**
   Develop a detailed plan with specific steps, timelines, and responsibilities to achieve the Tier 1 targets and to ensure the businesses progression to Tier 2 - 35% reduction target.
3. **Business's internal directory of preferred suppliers established**
   Identify and list suppliers who can supply evidence that their alternatives and substitutes are safe and sustainable based on a set of criteria developed by a team of independent experts and reviewed by an independent expert body.
4. **Baseline of SUP procurement set**
   Assess and document current SUP procurement, including types, quantities, and sources.
5. **SUP reduction target of 35% set**
   Define and formalise a measurable target to reduce SUP procurement by 35% from the established baseline.

Tier 2: 35% reduction from procurement baseline by 2030
To achieve Tier 2, businesses must complete the following actions:

1. **Policy review and update**
   Conduct an internal review of the SUP Reduction Policy, incorporating provisions for education, awareness, and partnership opportunities.

2. **Action plan revision**
   Update the SUP Reduction Action Plan to include strategies for achieving a 70% reduction by 2033, with clear steps for education, awareness, and partnerships.

3. **Preferred supplier directory approval**
   Submit the business's internal directory of preferred suppliers to the national certifying body for assessment and formal approval.

4. **35% SUP reduction demonstrated**
   Provide verified evidence of a minimum 35% reduction in SUP procurement compared to the Tier 1 baseline.

5. **70% SUP reduction target set**
   Formalise and document a new target to reduce SUP procurement by 70% from the baseline by 2033. (Tier 3)

6. **Partnership agreements drafted**
   Share draft partnership agreements, including documentation of Free Prior and Informed Consent, with the certifying body for review.

Tier 3: 70% reduction from procurement baseline by 2033
To achieve Tier 3, businesses must complete the following actions:

1. **Policy review and expansion**
   Conduct an internal review of the updated SUP Reduction Policy, incorporating documented success of awareness campaigns and finalised partnership agreements.

2. **Action plan review and expansion**
   Update the SUP Reduction Action Plan to reflect completed awareness campaigns and active partnerships, ensuring alignment with Tier 4 (100% reduction) targets.

3. **Updated preferred supplier directory approval**
   Submit the revised internal directory of preferred suppliers to the national certifying body for review and approval.

4. **70% SUP reduction demonstrated**
   Provide verified evidence of a minimum 70% reduction in SUP procurement compared to the Tier 1 baseline.

5. **100% SUP reduction target set**
   Formalise and document the commitment to eliminate all non-essential SUP procurement by 2035 (Tier 4).

6. **Education and awareness reporting**
   Submit detailed reports on executed awareness campaigns, including reach and engagement metrics.

7. **Action plan reporting mechanisms approved**
   Ensure all monitoring, evaluation, and reporting frameworks within the action plan are reviewed and approved by the national certifying body.

8. **Finalised partnership agreements**
   Provide signed partnership agreements, including validated Free, Prior, and Informed Consent documentation, to the certifying body.

Tier 4: 100% reduction from procurement baseline by 2035
To achieve Tier 4, businesses must complete the following actions:

1. **Policy review to maintain zero-SUP procurement**
   Conduct an internal review and update of the SUP Reduction Policy to formalise and maintain zero-SUP procurement status, ensuring alignment with long-term sustainability goals.

2. **Action plan review and zero-SUP compliance**
   Revise the SUP Reduction Action Plan to include strategies for sustaining zero-SUP procurement, with clear accountability measures and contingency protocols.

3. **Final preferred supplier directory approval**
   Submit the updated internal directory of preferred suppliers — now fully compliant with zero-SUP requirements — to the national certifying body for review and approval.

4. **100% SUP reduction demonstrated**
   Provide audited evidence confirming the complete elimination of non-essential SUP procurement, validated against the Tier 1 baseline.

5. **Education and awareness sustainability reporting**
   Document and submit comprehensive reports on ongoing awareness initiatives, including training programmes, stakeholder engagement, and metrics to sustain zero-SUP practices.

6. **Zero-SUP reporting mechanisms approved**
   Ensure all monitoring and reporting systems within the action plan are reviewed and certified by the national body to guarantee continuous compliance with zero-SUP status.

7. **Partnership performance reporting**
   Submit reports on partnership outcomes, including collaborative efforts to innovate beyond SUP and address supply chain challenges.

8. **Partnership agreements renewed**
   Review and renew all partnership agreements, with updated Free, Prior, and Informed Consent documentation, to reflect zero-SUP objectives and mutual accountability.

Flexibility In Design

The Certification Framework is designed with flexibility in mind. Most businesses will start at Tier 1, but can progress to any tier as long as they have met the specific elements required for that tier. For example, a business that can demonstrate that it has reduced SUP procurement by 70% since Tier 1 could enter at Tier 3, provided they meet the necessary criteria, such as policy updates and action plan development. A business may enroll directly into Tier 4 if it can provide sufficient evidence of maintaining zero-SUP procurements and has maintained sufficient records of other Tier 4 elements.

Applying For Retention And Advancement

Businesses must apply to retain certification for the current tier or to advance to the next tier. NTOs or national certifying bodies will determine the certification period for each tier. However, in order to meet the decade of action target, each tier period will typically range between 12 and 24 months. This will allow sufficient time for businesses to demonstrate they have met the relevant SUP procurement reduction targets.

While the goal of the certification scheme is to encourage progression to higher tiers, businesses may be declined recertification to their current tier or advancement to the next tier. Businesses that cannot provide sufficient evidence for advancement to the next tier may remain at the same tier until they can. Businesses may also be relegated to a lower tier if they fail to provide evidence of sustained achievement for their current tier. In either case, the certifying body will work with the business to identify areas for improvement and provide the necessary support.

Implementation Toolkit for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs

PREAMBLE

The Toolkit is a comprehensive resource designed to support tourism businesses in implementing the Certification Framework, which is guided by the Standards for Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs

Overview Of The Toolkit

This toolkit provides practical tools, templates, and guidance to help businesses reduce and ultimately eliminate SUPs from their operations, contributing to a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable Pacific region. In the spirit of not reinventing the wheel, the tools have been sourced from relevant and progressive initiatives in the Pacific and across the globe. This simply means we are not starting something new. We are recognising the efforts of our global community in tackling the impacts of plastic pollution.

Tailored to the unique cultural, environmental, and economic context of PICTs, it recognises tourism's critical role in protecting our islands and oceans and the urgent need to address plastic pollution. By focusing on procurement targets, the toolkit empowers businesses to proactively reduce their plastic footprint at the source, minimising waste and supporting the transition to a circular economy.

Role Of The Toolkit

The Toolkit is a practical supplement to the Standards and Certification Framework and designed to:

Clarify complex standards
Break down technical requirements into actionable steps.

Provide practical resources
Offer templates, checklists, and case studies to streamline implementation.

Promote consistency and efficiency
Ensure a standardised approach to SUP reduction across the tourism industry.

Build capacity
Equip businesses with the knowledge and skills needed to achieve and maintain certification.

The toolkit builds on existing resources, such as the methodologies, tools, and guidance developed under the Global Tourism Plastics Initiative (GTPI) led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UN Tourism, which provides capacity-building support to tourism sector stakeholders on the circular economy of plastics and directly supports the effective implementation of the SPTO-led standards and certification scheme.

The toolkit also refers to relevant tools such as Taronga Zoo's Litter Free Rivers Toolkit for Businesses, while tailoring its content to the unique needs of Pacific Islands. It serves as a centralised hub for information, saving businesses time and resources while fostering a culture of sustainability and continuous improvement.

By using this toolkit, tourism businesses can not only meet the requirements of the Certification Framework but also enhance their competitiveness, protect the environment, and contribute to the well-being of local communities. The Toolkit is a vital tool for advancing environmental stewardship and promoting sustainable tourism practices across the Pacific region.

Who Can Use The Toolkit?

The Toolkit is designed for a wide range of stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Pacific Island Countries, including:

- **Tourism Businesses**
  Accommodation providers, tour operators, restaurants, cafes, and other tourism-related enterprises seeking to reduce their plastic footprint and achieve certification.
- **NTOs**
  Agencies responsible for developing and overseeing national certification schemes and supporting businesses in their sustainability efforts.
- **Certifying Bodies**
  Organisations tasked with reviewing and approving certification applications, ensuring compliance with the standards and framework.
- **Government Agencies**
  Policymakers and regulators working to align tourism practices with national and regional sustainability goals.
- **Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**
  Groups advocating for environmental protection and sustainable tourism, providing support and resources to businesses.

How To Use The Toolkit?

The toolkit is designed to be user-friendly and flexible, allowing businesses to navigate its resources based on their specific needs and certification tier. Here's how to make the most of the toolkit:

Step 1: Understand your starting point

- **Conduct a baseline assessment**
  Use the Simplified Single-Use Plastics Audit Guide to assess your current SUP usage and identify key areas for reduction.
- **Review the Standards and Certification Framework**
  Familiarise yourself with the goals and requirements of the Standards and Certification Framework.

Step 2: Develop your SUP reduction plan

- **Create a procurement policy**
  Use the Procurement Policy Template to outline your commitment to phasing out SUPs and set clear targets.
- **Develop an action plan**
  Use the Action Plan Template to define specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities for achieving your SUP reduction goals.

Step 3: Implement and monitor progress

- **Engage stakeholders**
  Use the tools to educate staff and guests about your SUP reduction efforts.
- **Track your progress**
  Use the Recording/Reporting Templates to monitor your SUP usage and report on your progress to the certifying body.

Step 4: Advance through the certification tiers

- **Tier 1 (2027)**
  Establish your baseline and develop your SUP reduction policy and action plan.
- **Tier 2 (2030)**
  Achieve 35% reduction in SUP procurement and update your policies and plans.
- **Tier 3 (2033)**
  Achieve 70% reduction in SUP procurement and enhance your reporting and partnerships.
- **Tier 4 (2035)**
  Achieve 100% reduction in SUP procurements and maintain zero-SUP operations.

Step 5: Additional resources

- **Explore case studies**
  Learn from successful examples of businesses that have phased out SUPs.
- **Access templates and guides**
  Use the Supplier Directory, Partnership Working Agreements Template, and other tools to support your efforts.
- **Seek support**
  Reach out to certifying bodies, NTOs, or NGOs for additional guidance and assistance.

Step 6: Continuously Improve

- **Evaluate your practices**
  Use the Evaluation of Sustainable Plastic Management tools to assess your progress and identify areas for improvement.
- **Stay informed**
  Keep up to date with the latest research, policies, and good practices through Science-Policy Briefs and other resources.

Access The Toolkit

The toolkit can be accessed from the SPTO website www.southpacificislands.travel.

Appendix A: Glossary

This glossary provides definitions of key terms and concepts used in the Standards, Certification Framework, and Toolkit for the Tourism Industry Phaseout of SUPs in PICTs. It is designed to enhance understanding and ensure consistent interpretation of these terms across the tourism sector.

Action Plan is a comprehensive, time-bound strategy document that specifies the concrete steps, responsible parties, resource allocation, and measurable milestones required to achieve single-use plastic (SUP) phaseout objectives. This includes detailed implementation timelines, key performance indicators (KPIs), and contingency measures to address potential challenges in transitioning away from SUP dependence.

Alternative Products constitutes non-plastic or improved plastic solutions designed to replace single-use items while maintaining functionality. These encompass: (1) reusable products made from durable materials like stainless steel or silicone; (2) biodegradable materials that break down naturally under specific conditions; (3) compostable items that decompose into non-toxic organic matter; and (4) innovative material solutions such as algae-based packaging or edible utensils. All alternatives must demonstrate reduced environmental impact across their full lifecycle compared to conventional SUPs.

Baseline Assessment defines a rigorous, data-driven evaluation process that quantifies a business's current single-use plastic footprint across all operational areas. This includes: (1) comprehensive audits of SUP types, volumes, and procurement sources; (2) mapping of plastic flows through operations; (3) identification of usage hotspots; and (4) establishment of verifiable metrics that will serve as reference points for measuring reduction progress against certification tier requirements.

Biodegradable is a material characteristic indicating the capacity to undergo biological decomposition by microorganisms (bacteria, fungi) into water, carbon dioxide, and biomass under specific environmental conditions. Importantly, biodegradation: (1) requires appropriate temperature, moisture, and microbial activity; (2) timeframes vary significantly (weeks to years); (3) does not necessarily imply non-toxicity - some biodegradable plastics leave harmful residues; and (4) must be verified through standardized testing protocols (e.g., ISO 14855).

Bioplastics includes a broad category of plastic-like materials derived either wholly or partially from renewable biological resources (plant starches, cellulose, algae) rather than fossil fuels. Key subcategories include: (1) Bio-based non-biodegradable plastics (e.g., bio-PET); (2) Bio-based biodegradable plastics (e.g., PLA, PHA); (3) Fossil-fuel-based biodegradable plastics (e.g., PBAT). Critical considerations include land-use impacts of feedstocks, end-of-life processing requirements, and potential contamination of recycling streams.

Brand Audit Guide is a methodological framework enabling businesses to systematically evaluate all plastic packaging and branded materials through an environmental lens. The process involves: (1) inventorying all plastic touchpoints with customers; (2) assessing necessity and reduction potential; (3) identifying over-packaging opportunities; (4) evaluating alternative delivery models (e.g., refill stations); and (5) developing phaseout timelines aligned with certification tier requirements.

Carbon Footprint constitutes the total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused directly and indirectly by an entity's activities, expressed in carbon dioxide equivalents (CO_2e). For plastics, this encompasses emissions from: (1) raw material extraction and processing; (2) manufacturing and transportation; (3) use-phase impacts; and (4) end-of-life treatment. The carbon footprint of SUPs is particularly significant due to their typically fossil-fuel origins and low utilization rates before disposal.

Certification Framework is comprised of a multi-tiered accreditation system

specifically designed for Pacific Island tourism businesses to progressively eliminate single-use plastics through four developmental stages: Tier 1 (baseline establishment), Tier 2 (35% reduction), Tier 3 (70% reduction), and Tier 4 (100% elimination by 2035). The framework provides: standardised assessment criteria; verified monitoring methodologies; technical assistance resources; and third-party verification protocols to ensure credibility and regional consistency.

Certifying Body is the accredited institution(s) responsible for administering the SUP phaseout certification programme. Key functions include: (1) reviewing and approving certification applications; (2) conducting compliance audits; (3) maintaining the preferred suppliers database; (4) providing capacity-building support; and (5) enforcing accountability measures. In Pacific Island contexts, this role is typically fulfilled by NTOs working in partnership with environmental agencies and regional bodies like SPREP.

Circular economy is an economic system where materials are designed and used to remain in the economy for as long as possible, thereby eliminating all waste and pollutants. Instead of a linear production-use-dispose method, the circular system involves waste prevention and designing out non-circular and toxic materials, sharing, leasing, reusing, refilling, repairing, refurbishing, repurposing, composting

Climate Change Adaptation is the process of adjusting tourism operations and infrastructure to actual or expected climatic changes and their impacts. For SUP reduction, this involves: (1) selecting alternative materials resilient to changing temperatures/humidity; (2) designing systems that account for increased storm frequency/intensity; (3) ensuring waste management infrastructure can withstand climate stressors; and (4) developing contingency plans for climate-related disruptions to supply chains of sustainable alternatives.

Climate Change Mitigation is the actions taken to reduce or prevent greenhouse gas emissions associated with tourism operations. In the context of SUP phaseouts, key strategies include: (1) transitioning to low-carbon alternative materials; (2) optimizing logistics to minimize transport emissions; (3) implementing energy-efficient waste processing; and (4) selecting suppliers with verifiable carbon reduction commitments. Mitigation efforts should be quantified and reported against international standards like the GHG Protocol.

Community-Based Tourism (CBT) is a model where local communities maintain substantial ownership and control over tourism activities, ensuring benefits are equitably distributed. When implementing SUP reductions, CBT principles require: (1) participatory decision-making with local stakeholders; (2) procurement prioritization of community-produced alternatives; (3) cultural appropriateness of substitute products; and (4) reinvestment of cost savings into local environmental initiatives.

Compostable includes materials that undergo biological degradation under specific controlled conditions (temperature, humidity, microbial presence) to yield CO_2, water, inorganic compounds, and biomass at a rate consistent with other compostable materials, leaving no visible, distinguishable or toxic residues. Industrial compostability (typically requiring 50-60°C) is distinguished from home compostability, with only the latter being viable for most Pacific Island communities lacking industrial composting infrastructure.

Container deposit/return schemes (CDS) are designed to incentivise the return of containers (for example) for reuse/ refill, repair, and recycling. Often, a deposit is built into the price of a product, which is refunded to the consumer on return of the empty container. This applies to various types of containers, including stainless steel, glass, ceramic, and plastic. The refundable deposit is reimbursed at convenient collection points such as supermarkets or reverse vending machines.

Criteria are the specific and observable elements that define the expected level of quality, performance, or compliance within a particular standard. These criteria serve as the benchmarks against which processes, products, or services are evaluated to ensure they meet the established standards.

Cultural Heritage Preservation is the protection and respectful interpretation of tangible (artifacts, buildings) and intangible (traditions, knowledge) cultural assets. When phasing out SUPs, considerations include: (1) respecting

traditional material uses; (2) ensuring alternatives align with cultural practices; (3) involving indigenous knowledge in solution design; and (4) using SUP reduction as an opportunity to revive traditional, sustainable packaging methods where appropriate.

Degradable Plastics are defined as plastic materials engineered to break down through chemical, biological, or photodegradation processes. Important distinctions include:

- *Oxo-degradable*: Fragment into microplastics through oxidation (not recommended)
- *Hydro-degradable*: Water-soluble polymers
- *Bio-degradable*: Enzymatic breakdown by microorganisms
- All degradable plastics require specific environmental conditions to decompose completely and must be carefully evaluated to avoid creating microplastic pollution or disrupting existing waste management systems.

Emergency Response Plan Template guides businesses in responding to environmental emergencies like plastic spills.

Energy efficiency is the minimisation of energy needed to produce goods while maintaining functionality and quality. The plastics sector is recognised as a high-energy consumption sector. With energy efficiency measures, such as shortening supply chains by buying locally, it is possible to reduce energy costs and lower overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the plastics supply chain.

Environmental Impact considers the effect of human activities on ecosystems, including pollution, habitat destruction, and resource depletion. Businesses should assess and mitigate their environmental impact to reduce harm to biodiversity and natural systems.

Essential use approach determines whether the use or function of a material is necessary for health, safety and/or functioning of society. The essential use approach could be adapted to develop essential use/essentiality criteria to support single-use plastic phaseouts. Parties could apply for time-bound exemptions if they can provide sufficient evidence that the product is necessary for health and safety or is critical for the functioning of society and if there are no alternatives that are acceptable from the perspective of human health and the environment.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) involves producers taking responsibility for the management of products after they become waste, including collection; pre-treatment, e.g., sorting, dismantling or de-pollution; (preparation for) reuse; recovery (including recycling and energy recovery) or final disposal. EPR could also be designed to ensure producers are responsible for the full life cycle of their products, including all externalities such as financial and environmental costs to communities.

Fair Trade defines an equitable international trade partnership model that ensures producers in developing countries receive fair wages and work under safe conditions. Fair trade principles can be applied to the procurement of sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics, ensuring ethical sourcing and social responsibility.

Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) is a principle that ensures businesses partner with, and obtain, and regularly review informed consent from local communities and stakeholders, particularly Indigenous communities, prior to implementing SUP reduction initiatives that may affect them.

Full lifecycle approach is an environmental strategy that considers the environmental impacts of plastic materials throughout their entire lifespan, from the extraction of raw materials, production, packaging, distribution, use, maintenance, recycling, reuse, disposal or incineration, recovery and remediation.

Greenhouse Gases (GHG) defines eat-trapping gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and nitrous oxide (N_2O), that contribute to climate change by increasing global temperatures. The plastics sector is a significant emitter of GHGs due to fossil fuel extraction, production, and waste management processes. Reducing plastic use and improving energy efficiency can lower GHG emissions.

Hazardous Waste constitutes waste that poses substantial risks to public health or the environment due to its chemical, biological, or physical properties. Some plastic waste, including certain additives and contaminated plastics, may be classified as hazardous and require special disposal methods to prevent harm.

Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is a formal body established by the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) to develop an international legally binding

agreement on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. The INC brings together member states, observers, and stakeholders to negotiate terms for reducing plastic production, improving waste management, and addressing the full lifecycle of plastics. The committee aims to create a global framework that harmonizes policies, sets measurable targets, and promotes cooperation to mitigate the environmental and health impacts of plastic pollution.

Integrated Waste Management is a comprehensive approach to waste handling that prioritizes reduction, reuse, recycling, and safe disposal. Businesses should adopt integrated waste management strategies to minimize SUP waste and improve resource recovery.

Interpretation Products outlines educational materials (e.g., signage, brochures, digital content) designed to inform guests and stakeholders about plastic pollution, its impacts, and sustainable alternatives. Interpretation products can support behavior change and encourage participation in waste reduction initiatives.

Just transition is the process of moving away from unsafe and unsustainable SUPs by developing creative policies that promote economic and employment opportunities high on the zero-waste hierarchy and that involve representatives of diverse sectors and backgrounds.

Legacy Plastics includes existing plastic waste that persists in the environment for decades or centuries due to slow degradation rates. Legacy plastics include macroplastics (e.g., bottles, fishing gear) and microplastics that accumulate in terrestrial and marine ecosystems, causing long-term harm to wildlife, habitats, and human health. These plastics often fragment into smaller particles but do not fully biodegrade, releasing toxic additives and contributing to ongoing pollution. Addressing legacy plastics requires remediation efforts, such as clean-up initiatives and policies to prevent further accumulation.

Locally Sourced includes products obtained from nearby suppliers to reduce transportation emissions, support local economies, and minimize supply chain environmental impacts. Businesses can prioritize locally sourced alternatives to SUPs to enhance sustainability.

Marine Protected Area (MPA) are designated ocean zones where human activities are regulated to conserve marine biodiversity and ecosystems. MPAs can help mitigate plastic pollution by restricting waste discharge and promoting sustainable practices among coastal businesses.

Micro- and nano-plastics (MNPs) Microplastics are small pieces of plastic with their longest dimension ≤ 5 mm (1). They originate from multiple sources, broadly subdivided as primary (manufactured ≤ 5mm) and secondary (generated by wear or fragmentation of larger plastic items). Nano plastics are a subcategory of microplastics with a size ranging between 1 nm and 1 µm.

Nature-based solutions (NbS) is an approach that emphasises harnessing the power of nature and its processes to create sustainable, cost-effective, and environmentally beneficial solutions to the plastics crisis. Several alternatives inspired by nature to respond to the plastics crisis are emerging which offer multiple benefits, including increased biodiversity, improved human well-being, and climate resilience. Implementing NbS requires cooperation and collaboration between governments, CSOs, and private sector actors.

Partnership Agreement is when the business advocates for and engages in a PWA between tourism industry associations (national and regional) and government departments. The PWA may establish

- The terms and conditions of the collaboration between stakeholder partners;
- The objectives of the partnership, roles and responsibilities, and decision-making strategies;
- Conflict resolution or prevention strategies and approaches; and
- Strategic working arrangements.

Plastic alternatives (Bioplastics) the term ‘bioplastics’ is not used consistently and has led to much confusion. Therefore, we recommend avoiding the use of this term. Instead, plastic alternatives will be used as an umbrella term for bio-based plastics and biodegradable plastics (including home and industrially compostable plastics). ‘Bioplastics’ is a term that includes plastic materials made of biodegradable polymers (including those from fossil fuels) and plastics composed of bio-based polymers and a combination of the two. Plastic alternatives can present similar hazards to conventional plastics. For example, plastic alternatives have been found to contain more toxic

additives than conventional plastics. We distinguish between 'bio-based plastics', 'biodegradable plastics', 'biodegradation', and 'compostable' as follows:

- **Bio-based plastics** are composed or derived (entirely or partially) from renewable, biological products (including plant/forestry, animal, and marine biomass). They are not necessarily biodegradable or compostable.
- **Biodegradable plastics** can be made from renewable or fossil carbon sources and are intended to biodegrade more rapidly than conventional plastics but require specific conditions. Biodegradation of plastics is a 'system property' requiring i) material properties that allow for microbial conversion into methane or carbon dioxide, water, mineral salts, and new microbial biomass; and ii) suitable conditions in the receiving environment (microorganisms, temperature, pH, moisture, etc.) for biodegradation to take place.
- **Compostable plastics** are a subset of biodegradable plastics. While some are intended to be 'home compostable', most must be collected and transferred to appropriate industrial/commercial composting facilities and require certain conditions - e.g. sufficiently high temperatures. This distinction is seldom adequately labelled on products.

Plastic chemicals are the organic polymers (large molecules made from repeating units, often derived from plant extracts or fossil fuels) used in the production of all plastics, including plastic alternatives. While these polymers provide the main structure of plastics, additives are also commonly used to enhance properties like strength, colour, and flexibility. Impurities and residues can also be present, which can sometimes have unknown effects on humans and the environment.

Precautionary principle is when a party may take measures to prevent possible harmful effects, even if definitive proof of damage has not yet been identified. Parties may, or even must, do this if there is a risk of irreversible damage.

Preferred Suppliers Directory includes a list of suppliers offering safe and sustainable SUP alternatives and substitutes, curated by businesses based on evidence-based guidance from the Toolkit to support SUP procurement phaseouts.

Prevention principle is based on the rationale that environmental damage is best avoided rather than repaired. Applying the 'no-harm' rule of the prevention principle, means parties are obligated to ensure that single use plastics do not cause significant harm beyond their jurisdiction or control.

Procurement involves every activity related to obtaining the goods and services a company needs to support its daily operations, including sourcing, negotiating terms, purchasing items, receiving and inspecting goods as necessary, and keeping records of all the steps in the process.

Procurement Baseline is the initial assessment of a business's current SUP usage, including types, quantities, and sources. This baseline serves as a reference point for measuring future reductions and developing SUP reduction policies and action plans.

Procurement Policy is a formal commitment by a business to sustainable procurement practices, including the phaseout of SUPs and the prioritization of environmentally friendly alternatives.

Recycled plastics have been referred to as the 'fig leaf' of the global plastics crisis because, globally, only 9% of plastics have ever been recycled. Collection and sorting continue to present seemingly insurmountable challenges in most locations, and plastics cannot be infinitely recycled. Even the most recyclable resin type (PET) has to be disposed of after approximately seven cycles. At each cycle, virgin resin and additives are added to maintain the integrity of the final product. Therefore, plastics are linear, not circular materials. As a result of additional chemicals included and microplastics shedding at each cycle, recycled plastics are more toxic and otherwise hazardous for human and environmental health than virgin plastics.

Retention and Advancement is the process by which businesses apply to maintain their current certification tier or progress to a higher tier. This is subject to review andd approval by the certifying body.

Reusable plastics are products designed for multiple uses to reduce waste generation. Businesses should promote reusable systems (e.g., refillable containers) as a key strategy in SUP reduction.

Single-use/short-lived plastics: Single-use plastics (SUP) (also known as short-lived plastics) are plastic items intended to be used only once or designed with

short average use cycles of between 0.5 and 3 years before they are discarded or enter waste management systems.

Standards are frameworks or criteria used to assess sustainability performance, such as certifications for plastic-free operations or eco-labeling for products. Standards help businesses measure progress and ensure credibility.

Sustainable Procurement is the practice of purchasing goods and services with minimal negative environmental and social impacts. Businesses should prioritize suppliers offering safe, durable, and low-impact alternatives to SUPs.

Sustainable Tourism is tourism that balances economic benefits with environmental protection and social equity. Reducing SUPs is a critical component of sustainable tourism practices.

Substitutes/Non-plastic substitutes are non-plastic materials and products used to substitute plastic items. The term should be applied to entire products as many products are made of a combination of materials and chemicals and sometimes a combination of biomass and fossil fuel sources. Some substitute products may contain harmful substances, such as new and recycled paper and board food contact materials that contain toxic substances, including some per-and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), organophosphate esters (OPEs), and plasticisers.

SUP Procurement Reduction Policy is a business's documented principle of action to phaseout SUP procurements, including targets and timelines.

Target Setting is the process of establishing measurable and achievable goals for reducing SUP procurements. Targets should align with scientific recommendations and international agreements.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) defines Indigenous and local community knowledge about ecosystems, biodiversity, and sustainable resource management. TEK can inform nature-based solutions and culturally appropriate plastic reduction strategies.

Upcycling is the transformation of waste materials into products of higher value or quality. Upcycling can extend the lifespan of materials and reduce reliance on virgin plastics.

Waste Diversion is the redirection of waste from landfills through recycling, composting, or reuse. Businesses should aim for high waste diversion rates to minimize SUP disposal.

Zero-waste and zero-waste hierarchy the zero-waste approach involves the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials without burning them and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human capital health. The zero-waste hierarchy is the progression of policies and strategies to support the zero-waste system, from highest and best to lowest use of materials. Prevention, reduction, redesign, refill, reuse, repair, repurpose and remanufacture all sit at the top of the zero-waste hierarchy.

Appendix B: Alignment With GSTC Standards

GSTC INDUSTRY STANDARD	HOW STANDARDS FOR PHASING OUT SUPs ALIGN WITH GSTC
A1 - Sustainability Management System	The criteria establish a comprehensive sustainability management system for procurement and waste management, aligning with the GSTC standard for implementing a long-term system addressing various sustainability issues and driving continuous improvement.
A2 - Legal Compliance	The criteria ensure compliance with relevant local, national, and international regulations related to plastic waste and sustainability, aligning with the GSTC standard for adhering to all applicable legal requirements.
A3 - Reporting and Communication	The criteria emphasise transparent communication about the sustainability policy, actions, and performance. This aligns with the GSTC standard for communicating sustainability efforts and engaging stakeholders.
A4 - Staff Engagement	The criteria ensure staff are educated on plastic waste minimisation and sustainability practices, aligning with the GSTC standard for engaging staff in the sustainability management system and providing periodic guidance and training.
A6 - Accurate Promotion	The criteria emphasise transparent and accurate communication about sustainability practices and the use of plastic alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for accurate and transparent promotional materials and marketing communications.
A7.2 - Impact and Integrity	The criteria take into account the impact on natural and cultural surroundings by promoting locally sourced and sustainable practices. This aligns with the GSTC standard for considering the capacity and integrity of natural and cultural settings.
A7.3 - Sustainable Practices and Materials	The criteria promote the use of locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials, aligning with the GSTC standard for using sustainable practices and materials in operations.
B1 - Community Support	The criteria focus on partnering with local communities and supporting local initiatives for plastic pollution prevention. This aligns with the GSTC standard for actively supporting local infrastructure and social development projects.
B2 - Local Employment	The criteria promote equal employment opportunities for local residents in developing plastic alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for providing local residents with equal opportunities for employment and advancement.

GSTC INDUSTRY STANDARD	HOW STANDARDS FOR PHASING OUT SUPs ALIGN WITH GSTC
B8 - Community Services	The criteria ensure that plastic pollution prevention efforts do not disrupt access to basic services for neighbouring communities. This aligns with the GSTC standard for ensuring that business activities do not jeopardise access to essential services.
B9 - Local Livelihoods	The criteria ensure that plastic pollution prevention does not negatively impact local livelihoods or access to resources. This supports the GSTC standard for safeguarding local access to livelihoods and resources.
C2 - Protecting Cultural Heritage	The criteria support local communities and protect intellectual property rights related to plastic alternatives, aligning with the GSTC standard for contributing to the protection and preservation of local cultural heritage.
D1.1 - Environmentally Preferable Purchasing	The criteria focus on procuring safe, sustainable, and certified products, including plastic alternatives and local, fair-trade goods, aligning with the GSTC standard for favouring environmentally preferable purchasing practices.
D1.2 - Efficient Purchasing	The criteria advocate for minimising waste, avoiding non-essential plastics, and purchasing in bulk, which aligns with the GSTC stand-ard on carefully managing consumable goods to reduce waste and enhance efficiency.
D1/3 Energy Conservation	The criteria include measures to minimise energy consumption in procurement processes, such as favouring products and suppliers with energy-efficient features and encouraging bulk purchasing to reduce packaging waste. These practices align with the GSTC standard for measuring and minimising energy consumption and increasing the use of renewable energy. The focus on energy-efficient procurement supports overall conservation efforts and reduces the environmental impact of operations.
D2.3 - Wastewater	The criteria include the installation of advanced filtration and treatment systems to capture and remove non-plastic microparticles from wastewater. This aligns with the GSTC standard for effective wastewater treatment with no adverse environmental effects.
D2.4 - Solid Waste	The criteria ensure waste is measured and mechanisms for reduction, reuse, or recycling are in place. This directly supports the GSTC standard for managing solid waste with minimal adverse effects on the environment and local population.
D2.5 - Harmful Substances	The criteria emphasise minimising and substituting harmful substances, including plastics, with safer alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for reducing the use of harmful substances and managing their storage, use, and disposal properly.
D2.6 - Minimize Pollution	The criteria include practices for mitigating pollution from plastics, such as preventing microplastic releases. This supports the GSTC standard for minimising various forms of pollution and contaminants.

PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT

PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION

PACIFIC OCEAN LITTER PROJECT

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