

# OUR PACIFIC OCEAN, OUR STORIES

## A Plastic-Free Ocean, Our Actions, Our Responsibility

“We are the ocean.” – Epli Hau'ofa

“For years we thought that the oceans were so vast and the inhabitants so infinitely numerous that nothing we could do could have an effect upon them. But now we know that was wrong. The oceans are under threat now as never before in human history.” – Sir David Attenborough

In 1950 it was estimated that two million metric tonnes of plastic was produced, in 2015 the planet produced 32 million metric tonnes of plastic. So where does it all go? Of the world's plastics nine percent is recycled, 12 percent is incinerated and 79 percent accumulates in landfills<sup>1</sup>, but remember what we do on land has great impact on our ocean.

Since Leo Baekeland invented the first synthetic plastic in 1907, plastic now plays a significant role in our lives, but each year over eight million tonnes of plastic ends up in our ocean with it making up at least 60–80% of the marine debris found in our ocean.<sup>2</sup>

There is now a public drive to ban the use of single use plastics, this sheet looks at what is being done across the globe and in our Pacific to address this issue.



### Our Pacific actions

In 2017 at the 48th Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting hosted in Samoa, there was a commitment from all leaders to “fast track the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastic bags, plastic and Styrofoam packaging and called on Pacific Rim partners to join and commit to action on addressing marine pollution and marine debris, to maintain the environmental integrity of the Pacific Ocean for people, planet and posterity.”

Leadership is being shown across the Pacific with a number of actions in place, we share a few with you.

BANS: SINGLE-USE PLASTIC BAGS	BANS: OTHER MATERIALS	LEVIES AND DEPOSITS
Samoa 2005	RMI Styrofoam cups and plates, disposable plastic cups and plates in February 2017	Kosrae and Yap States, FSM Container deposit
American Samoa January 2010	Pacific wide asbestos ban in September 2017	Fiji Single-use plastic bags, 10 cent FJD in August 2017
Pohnpei State, FSM September 2011		Kiribati Container deposit, lead-cell batteries
Yap state, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) 2014		French Polynesia Used oil levy
Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) February 2017.		New Caledonia Used oil levy and an e-waste levy
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) August 2017		Palau Container deposit
Palau November 2017		
Vanuatu February 2018		
Guam to take effect by January 2021		

<sup>1</sup> Geyer, R. et al. 2017. Production, use, and fate of all plastics every made. Science Advances. <http://advances.sciencemag.org/content/3/7/e1700782.full>

<sup>2</sup> Markic, A. & Costello, M.J. 2016. Plastic ingestion by fish in the South Pacific. [www.sprep.org/attachments/2016SM27/official/WP\\_9.3.2.Att.1\\_-\\_Plastic\\_ingestion\\_by\\_fish\\_in\\_the\\_South\\_Pacific\\_-\\_Samoa\\_results.pdf](http://www.sprep.org/attachments/2016SM27/official/WP_9.3.2.Att.1_-_Plastic_ingestion_by_fish_in_the_South_Pacific_-_Samoa_results.pdf)

## Moana Taka Partnership

The Moana Taka Partnership was signed in March, 2018 between the China Navigation Company (CNCo) and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). This has resulted in an initiative which allows for CNCo vessels to carry containers of toxic, poisonous, explosive, corrosive, flammable, eco-toxic, infectious and radioactive wastes from eligible Pacific island ports, pro bono, to be sustainably treated and recycled in suitable ports in Asia Pacific.

A first shipment of recyclable waste was packed and prepared by the Waste Management Apia Co. Ltd and Pacific Recyclers in Samoa two weeks after the Moana Taka Partnership was signed. The 21 countries eligible for this opportunity are American Samoa, Cook Islands, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna.

## Clean Seas for a Cleaner Pacific

At the UN Ocean Conference in 2017, a Clean Seas for a Cleaner Pacific commitment was launched, a cooperation between the UN Environment and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, bringing together two key components, the #Clean Seas Campaign and the Cleaner Pacific Strategy 2025, to reduce marine debris through a range of activities and outputs. This includes a marine debris portal hosted on the SPREP website available in 2018.

## Global action

### #Clean Seas Campaign

Launched in February 2017, this five year campaign engages governments, the general public, civil society and the private sector in the fight against marine plastic litter. It contributes to the goals of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter, a voluntary open-ended partnership for international agencies, governments, businesses, academia, local authorities and non-governmental organisations hosted by UN Environment.

For more information on the **Clean Seas Campaign** please visit: [www.cleanseas.org](http://www.cleanseas.org)

For more information on the **Global Partnership on Marine Litter** please visit [www.unep.org/gpa/what-we-do/global-partnership-marine-litter](http://www.unep.org/gpa/what-we-do/global-partnership-marine-litter)

### Plastic free July

Refusing to use plastic over the month of July is a campaign that has millions of people from over 150 countries worldwide committing to a plastic free month challenge. This can be done by individuals or in a group. To learn more and to register please visit [www.plasticfreejuly.org](http://www.plasticfreejuly.org)

### International Coastal Cleanup

Over 30 years ago communities came together to collect waste littering their coastline, this movement has now grown with the Ocean Conservancy into volunteers from over 100 countries coming together to take part in a Cleanup event near them followed by recording and documentation of waste collected. To learn more and, or sign up please visit [www.oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup](http://www.oceanconservancy.org/trash-free-seas/international-coastal-cleanup)

## Talking the talk

- **Container deposit** – Containers refer to bottles, or cans, any container that holds the product you wish to buy. When you purchase that product a deposit fee is built into the price, encouraging you to return the container for a part refund of the deposit fee. The other part of the deposit fee is used to pay for the collection, storage and recycling of your container.
- **Single use plastics** – plastic that tends to be used only once.
- **Used Oil Levy** – This is a similar concept as the container deposit. When you purchase lubricant oil, the levy is built into the price. When you return your used oil, you are refunded part of the levy, the remaining part of the levy pays for the system of collection, storage, and recycling or disposal.

## Telling our Pacific Stories

**What has your country done, or is doing to help reduce the use of plastics?** How is that progressing? What impacts are being felt? What needs to be done to revive this further? What is the private sector doing and is it working?

*If you can raise awareness of the work happening in your country, we can all be held accountable and all make sure we play our part in protecting our communities and our ocean. It's not just for the government, NGO's or communities, it can be for the media too!*

How about encouraging your newsroom or organisation to sign up and take part in some of these events, or even start small, commit to less plastic in your newsroom and organisation! Use reusable bags, have your own utensils instead of plastics and have a drink bottle that can be refilled! **Small steps can lead to big impacts!**

