



Rear-Admiral (Ret'd) Hon Josaia J.V. Bainimarama, CF (Mil), OSt.J, MSD, jssc, psc
Prime Minister and Minister for iTaukei Affairs, Sugar Industry, Foreign
Affairs and Forestry

Interactive Dialogue 1: Addressing marine pollution - on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum

Monday 27th June, 2022 – 1500 - 1800 hours, Tejo Hall, Altice Arena

The Co-Chairs,

I have the honour today to speak on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Member countries and territories and I thank our Co-Chairs, New Zealand and Seychelles for convening us on this important issue.

Pollution takes many forms, visible and invisible. The most obvious is litter, such as plastic. The most insidious is carbon emissions and nuclear waste. The Pacific feels all of it, despite contributing almost none. The Second World Ocean Assessment states that the highest recorded quantity of floating plastics are in the South Pacific sub-tropical gyre.

The volume of 368 million metric tonnes of virgin plastics that we produce every year is set to double by 2040. If the present trend continues, ninety percent of those plastics will end up in the environment, setting us on course to have more plastics than fish in our ocean within three decades.

Stemming plastic pollution starts with crafting sustainable alternatives. Locally-created alternatives would be a boon to many island economies. The urgency with which we pursue these solutions will determine the quality of the future, not only for migratory marine species such as seabirds, marine turtles, sharks, and whales, but for all people, in the Pacific, and everywhere else on the planet.

We welcome the United Nations Environment Assembly call to “End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument” which echoes the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and its Impacts. And we hope to see a global negotiation for a new binding international agreement that addresses plastic pollution by addressing the whole life cycle of plastics.

Along with plastics, discharge from ships, wastewater and local pollution are all worsening. And in the Pacific, some of our Forum Members have nuclear relics and unexploded ordnances in their backyards which continue to pose grave risks.

While I can scarcely believe this is even necessary to do: we totally condemn the dumping of radioactive nuclear waste and other radioactive material in the ocean. Japan's plans to discharge over a million tons of Advanced Liquid Processing System Treated Water into our ocean cannot happen. We urge them: Not in the ocean. Find another way that does not inadvertently kill marine species and the people who depend on them.

The ocean as a dumping ground is the thinking that created this crisis. It's easy to look out on the horizon and assume an endless and inexhaustible expanse. But we'd be fools to fall for that illusion. What we put into the ocean will always come back to haunt us. Someone will pay the price. If not us, then our children.

Let's not let them. Let's end marine pollution — in all its forms – before it's too late.

Vinaka vakalevu. Thank you.
