



2022 United Nations Ocean Conference Side Event

A Sustainable Blue Pacific Continent : Scaling up action through Ocean Science, Traditional knowledge for informed governance

Friday July 1, 14:30-1545, Interactive Dialogue Room

Organised by the [Pacific Community](#) and [SPREP](#) in partnership with Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, and Pacific Islands Forum.

Background on the event

Two Pacific regional scientific and environmental intergovernmental organisations came together to [co-host an official side event](#) at the United Nations Oceans Conference in partnership with Member States and partners. The side event highlighted how the Pacific islands region is applying the best available science and traditional knowledge to forge and strengthen partnerships to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Key Issues discussed

- Mr Sefanaia Nawadra, SPREP Director General moderated the side event.
- Side event opened with a video from the [Niue Ocean Wide](#) initiative, which served as a Pacific example of holistic sustainable development and management of the ocean and its resources, to improve economic returns and livelihoods for the people of Niue and to ensure conservation of resources for future generations.
- Hon. Mr Heremoana Maamaatuaiahutapu, Minister of Culture, Environment and Marine Resources of [French Polynesia presented on Coral Reef Action](#) and stressed the importance of taking into account local and traditional knowledge of the ocean environment. The Coral Reef Protection plan for French Polynesia was announced, which aims to protect all coral species in 2022 and then by 2030, all its coral ecosystems.
- H.E Dr Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Pa'olelei Luteru, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Mission of the Independent State of Samoa to the United Nations presented on the [Weather Ready Pacific Decadal Programme of Investment](#), endorsed by Pacific Leaders in 2021.

A transformative plan to strengthen the technical capacity of meteorological services in the Pacific, to help safeguard and protect communities during extreme weather events.

- Mr Richard Bontjer, Director, Environment, Oceans and Biodiversity Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia spoke on the Pacific Ocean Litter Project, which is helping [Pacific Island Countries to refuse, reduce and find alternatives to single-use plastics](#) – such as cutlery, food containers, drink bottles and bags
- Dr Eric Kwa of the Papua New Guinea Department of Justice Attorney General presented on the Marine Scientific Research Database and Monitoring System that Papua New Guinea is implementing to ensure the results of Marine Scientific Research are available to policy makers.
- Mr Filimone Ralogaivau from Climate Change and International Cooperation of the Ministry of Economy for Fiji, stressed the importance of establishing maritime boundaries under UNCLOS, to allow governance and sustainable management of biological diversity within Fiji maritime borders and also highlighted the importance of the ocean climate nexus.
- Ms Nicola Reid, the New Zealand Permanent Delegate to UNESCO the Science, discussed governance and traditional knowledge under the UN Decade, both in Aotearoa, New Zealand and in the Pacific.
- Dr Vladimir Ryabinin, Executive Secretary of IOC/UNESCO, and Mr Cameron Diver, Deputy-Director General of the Pacific Community concluded the event by [signing an Memorandum of understanding](#) between [IOC-UNESCO](#) and SPC formalising collaboration between the organisation and stressing the importance of the UN decade of Ocean Science to bring solutions and actions to build a sustainable Blue Pacific.
- Through a closing song by Tongan Artist Mia Kami, the audience was reminded of the integral relationship of the ocean with Pacific island people and culture and our collective responsibility to protect and conserve the health and wellbeing of the ocean.

Key recommendations for action

- Reaffirmed the critical status of the ocean to the future survival of Pacific island people, and the need for scaling up science-based action and innovation as a matter of urgency.
- Reiterated the integral relationship of Pacific island people with the ocean - culturally, socially, economically and scientifically.
- Reaffirmed the importance of continued partnerships in the Pacific for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals particularly 13: Climate Action and 14: Life Below Water.
- Reaffirmed the importance of leadership at the community, national and regional level to enable sustainable development that is meaningful, long term and inclusive, including acknowledging the role and value of traditional knowledge.

Recording of the side event is available from <https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1c/k1cckreeee>