

Intervention: Ocean Action Panel 1: Conserving, sustainably managing and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems including deep-sea ecosystems

For New Zealand and across the Pacific region, the Blue Ocean Continent is central to our well-being, from an economic, cultural and food security perspective. The health and resilience of marine and coastal ecosystems is the foundation of this.

Conserving coastal ecosystems that are critical habitats for threatened migratory seabirds and shorebirds is a priority for New Zealand. More seabird species breed in New Zealand than anywhere else in the world, and 90% of these are under threat. Some are at risk of extinction within 50 years if we do not strengthen conservation action through international cooperation.

New Zealand is part of the Island Ocean Connection Challenge (IOCC), a volunteer collective of NGOs, governments, funders, scientists, individuals, and island communities dedicated to restoring and rewilding 40 globally significant island-ocean ecosystems by 2030.

New Zealand is proud to have joined the IOCC and pledged to restore three of our globally significant islands – Rakiura/Stewart Island, Maukahuka/Auckland Island, and Chatham Islands. The New Zealand Government has already committed \$54 million to these projects as part of our Predator Free 2050 work. Through the partnership, we are working to raise a further \$137 million to rewild these islands so they become safe havens for native wildlife found nowhere else in the world.

We would also like to highlight our work with Pacific Island partners. Through the Pacific Regional Invasive Species Management Support Service (PRISMSS), we are managing the impacts of invasive species on climate resilience. PRISMSS takes a collaborative and Pacific-led approach to supporting countries. In 2023, New Zealand committed an additional NZ\$20 million to this work which includes a new focus on protecting marine areas from invasive species through a partnership with New Zealand's National Institute of Water and Atmospheric research.

We are also proud to be working closely with five Pacific island countries (Niue, Palau, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Cook islands) to support climate and biodiversity-smart marine spatial planning. This includes working with regional partners (SPREP and SPC) on capacity building and development of resources to support countries to build their own capacity to lead this work. One example is our contribution (NZ \$2m) to the Niue Ocean Wide Trust, an initiative led by the island nation of Niue to build a resilient blue economy through marine protection and sustainable development. Through the Trust, each of Niue's 14 villages will receive grants to support the implementation of their resource management plans.

New Zealand thanks our partners for their commitment to this work and looks forward to hearing more from colleagues around the world working on similar issues. Thank you.

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POLI-60-7610

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