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Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy
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PACIFIC ISLANDS REGIONAL OCEAN POLICY

DRAFT

VISION

A healthy Ocean that sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of Pacific Island communities.

THIS IS OUR OCEAN

1. The care of our Ocean is the responsibility of all people. The oceans are inter-connected and interdependent, covering seventy per cent of the world's surface. They are the last great frontier and their conservation and sustainable use is vital to the well being and survival of the human race.
2. For the past three thousand five hundred years, Pacific Island communities have inhabited the islands scattered throughout our Ocean across which some of the greatest migrations in human history have taken place. Our Ocean unites Pacific Island communities more than anything else. It has supported generations of Pacific Island communities –not only as a medium for transport but also as a source of food, tradition and culture.
3. Our Ocean and island ecosystems contain high biological diversity that has sustained the lives of Pacific Island communities, since first settlement. It contains the most extensive coral reefs in the world, globally important fisheries, significant seabed mineral resources and high number of threatened species. These ecosystems may contain many undiscovered resources of potential use to humankind.
4. The many thousands of islands are, with the exception of some larger Melanesian islands, entirely coastal in nature, often with limited freshwater resources.
5. Our Ocean is not only a lifeline, it is also a source of hazards. These hazards can be increased by the impact of human activities both within and external to the Pacific Islands region.
6. In modern times our Ocean provides the greatest opportunities for economic development. Responsibly managed, it has the potential to support Pacific Island communities, in perpetuity.
7. As Pacific Island communities we are acutely aware that over ninety eight per cent of the 38.5 million square kilometres of the Earth's surface over which we have influence is ocean. Concerns for the long-term health of the Ocean are not confined to the areas covered by sovereign rights, they extend equally to adjacent areas of high seas.

8. Our commitment to the development of a common Policy for this Ocean stems from our collective awareness of an increasing number and severity of threats to its long-term integrity. This Policy presents a framework for the sustainable management and conservation of the resources and habitats within the region. It provides guiding principles for individual and collaborative action that will promote responsible stewardship of this large Ocean for regional and global benefit.
9. These guiding principles are: improving our understanding of the Ocean; sustainably managing the Ocean resource use; maintaining the health of the Ocean; promoting the peaceful use of the Ocean; and creating partnerships and promoting co-operation.
10. We invite others to recognise our commitment to these guiding principles and support our strategies to implement this Policy to help ensure our Ocean remains healthy and sustains the livelihoods and aspirations of Pacific Island communities.

WHY A REGIONAL OCEAN POLICY?

11. The need for a Policy is based on our collective awareness of the transboundary and dynamic nature of our Ocean, the increasing number and severity of threats to its long-term integrity and the reality that sustainable economic and social development will be dependent on wise use of the Ocean and its resources.

PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

12. For the purpose of this Policy, the “region” includes that part of the Pacific Ocean over which the island countries and territories (Pacific Island communities), that are members of the organisations comprising the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific have stewardship. As such, the extent of the region includes not only the area within the 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundary circumscribing these island countries, but also the ocean areas that encompass the extent of the large marine ecosystems that transcend the region.
13. The “Ocean” is defined to include the waters of the ocean, the living and non-living elements within, the substrate beneath and the ocean-atmosphere and ocean-island interfaces.
14. Pacific Islands are often referred to as Small Island Developing States. In fact, they are Large Ocean Developing States. The number of islands, their relative isolation and the area of the Earth’s surface, which is ocean, makes our region unique (Annex 1).

Vulnerability

15. Pacific Island communities are vulnerable to environmental, economic and social factors.
16. Environmental factors include: climate variability, climate change and sea-level rise; other natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic events, fragile ecosystems and geographic isolation.
17. Economic factors include: the increasing domination of a cash economy; limited island production capacity; high dependence on distant external markets to generate foreign exchange; high import dependencies; limited local markets; limited economic bargaining power; limited options for diversification.
18. Social factors include: population growth; human and food security; cultural dilution and loss of useful traditional knowledge.

Rights and responsibilities

19. The Ocean has been the major influence in the history of Pacific Island communities. Throughout the region, customary association with the sea forms the basis of present day social structures, livelihoods and tenure systems and traditional systems of stewardship governing its use.
20. International law and instruments confer rights to Pacific Island communities relating to the use of the Ocean and its resources. With these rights come responsibilities, especially for sustainable management and conservation of the ocean's living resources and for the protection of the ocean environment and its biodiversity.
21. Pacific Island communities have established national laws, based on international principles, which provide for responsible management and use of the Ocean and its resources within their area of jurisdiction.
22. Island communities respect the rights and interests of others to participate in legitimate activities. With this sharing comes the expectation that they will meet their obligations and responsibilities in our Ocean.
23. This Policy promotes stewardship in addition to ownership. Good stewardship captures the element of trusteeship, which refers to active engagement by communities in caring for the oceans. It draws upon ideas, policies, institutions and enforcement procedures needed to protect the oceans from abuse including the effects of land-based activities.

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GOAL

24. The goal of this Policy is to ensure the future sustainable use of our Ocean and its resources by Pacific Islands communities and external partners.

25. The Guiding Principles to achieve this Goal are:

- Improving our Understanding of the Ocean
- Sustainably Managing the Ocean Resource Use
- Maintaining the Health Of the Ocean
- Promoting the Peaceful Use of the Ocean
- Creating Partnerships and Promoting Co-Operation

PRINCIPLE 1- IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE OCEAN

26. Contemporary and traditional understanding of the ocean provides the basis for sustainable use of the ocean and its resources, for the amelioration of pollution and harmful practices and for the prediction of weather, climate and ocean variability.

27. Trials with western-based resource management principles have generated limited success over the last 40 years. As a result resource managers in the Region increasingly advocate an enhanced role for community groups and customary resource owners in the development and application of local management arrangements.

28. Increased scientific understanding of ocean processes and ecosystems is critically dependent on access to science and technology, to enable research, exploration and development of both living and non-living marine resources, and of long-term monitoring and observation. The result will be improved ability to effectively conserve marine biological diversity and predict the impact of climate variation and human use patterns on the health of the ocean.

Strategic Actions

- To identify and prioritise information needs and the co-operative mechanisms for acquiring, accessing and disseminating this information. To strengthen national and regional capacity, encourage partnerships between regional and international organisations, and the public and private sectors, to improve our understanding of the ocean.
- To facilitate access to this information, encourage its wide application in the implementation of this Policy and any compatible national ocean policies that may be developed in association with it.
- To have regard for traditional knowledge and its potential to contribute to better understanding the ocean and to the effective management of contemporary issues.

PRINCIPLE 2 – SUSTAINABLY MANAGING THE OCEAN RESOURCE USE

29. Pacific Island communities are heavily reliant on the wide range of resources and services that the Ocean provides for their social, cultural and economic security. This includes not only the existing extractive uses of its living and non-living resources but also the non-extractive uses such as transport and communication, waste disposal, recreation and tourism, and cultural activities. New research and technologies are creating opportunities for accessing and using the ocean and its resources.
30. To safeguard Pacific Island communities and maintain the health of our Ocean, in perpetuity, it is imperative that we adopt a precautionary management approach to ensure the use of the Ocean and its resources are sustainable.

Strategic Actions

- To identify and prioritise management actions for sustainable resource use based on the precautionary principle.
- To engage local communities in resource management decision making.
- To build capacity of Pacific Island communities in sustainable resource management use
- To encourage benefit sharing of resources at local, national and regional levels.
- To establish and protect traditional knowledge rights and bio-property rights.
- To enhance the stewardship ethic in Pacific Island communities at local, national and regional levels.

PRINCIPLE 3 - MAINTAINING THE HEALTH OF THE OCEAN

31. The health and productivity of our Ocean is driven by regional-scale ecosystem processes. It is dependent upon preserving ecosystem integrity and minimising the impact of human activity.
32. Threats to Ocean health and productivity, reflected in a degradation in water quality and resource depletion include accidental and deliberate dumping of fuels, chemicals and ballast water from ships, aircraft and satellite launches, and non sustainable resource use.
33. Pollution from the land contributes up to eighty per cent of all ocean pollution and is a major threat to the long-term health of nearshore systems affecting ecological processes, public health and social and commercial use of ocean resources.

Strategic Actions

- To adopt an integrated transboundary approach, through harmonised institutional arrangements, to managing marine ecosystems for long term sustainable benefit.
- To incorporate sound environmental practices into social and economic development activities.
- To protect and conserve biological diversity of the ocean ecosystem at local, national and regional levels.
- To reduce the impact of all sources of pollution on our Ocean environment.

PRINCIPLE 4 – PROMOTING THE PEACEFUL USE OF THE OCEAN

34. Peaceful uses of the Ocean have environmental, political, social economic, and security dimensions. Promoting peaceful use means discouraging and eliminating unacceptable, illicit or non-peaceful activities such as the transport of nuclear materials, dumping of solid, chemical and other hazardous materials and, military and criminal activities.
35. Non-peaceful use of our Ocean threatens the major source of livelihood for Pacific Island communities.

Strategic Actions

- To ensure that all activities carried out in our Ocean meet all relevant international and regional safety standards, and do not cause environmental damage or social economic hardship to the region.

- To seek remedial actions in the event of an incident during non-peaceful use of the Ocean
- To ensure that the ocean is not used for criminal activities nor for other activities that breach national or international laws
- To encourage co-operation amongst law enforcement agencies.

PRINCIPLE 5. – CREATING PARTNERSHIPS AND PROMOTING CO-OPERATION

36. Partnerships and cooperation provide an enabling environment and are essential for the sustainable management of our Ocean. As a group Pacific Island communities achieve economies of scale, a united voice for international advocacy, a regional power bloc with increased international influence and a forum for developing coordinated action on ocean issues of mutual interest or with transboundary implications.

37. In pursuit of creating partnerships and promoting cooperation, Pacific Island communities will seek to maintain sovereign rights and responsibilities in managing, protecting and developing the Ocean.

Strategic Actions

- To foster partnerships and cooperation in the areas of security, monitoring, enforcement and the sustainable management of the Ocean.
- To make fullest possible use of regional and international partnerships and collaboration, such as regional organisations, ocean-related treaties, and bilateral arrangements as appropriate.
- To have regard for the ocean policies of ocean jurisdictions adjoining our own, and advocate that their policies have regard for this Policy.
- To encourage Pacific Island communities to develop national ocean policies that complement this Policy.

FUTURE

38. This Policy provides the basis for the harmonisation of national and regional actions, for the next five years. The implementation process will require a commitment by all stakeholders.

39. The next stage will involve the development of a Regional Ocean Strategic Action Plan based on the guiding principles and strategic actions articulated in this Policy.

40. The Regional Ocean Strategic Action Plan, including a review process, will provide the basis from which to develop programmes to implement this Policy and monitor its relevance and effectiveness.

Annex 1: Pacific Island communities Essential Statistics

COUNTRY	LAND AREA (km ²)	EEZ AREA (km ²)	POPULATION	CONTRIBUTION of OCEAN TO GDP
<i>American Samoa</i>	197	434 700	54 800	
<i>CNMI</i>	478	777 000	56 700	
Cook Islands	240	1 830 000	18 000	
FSM	700	2 978 000	95 000	
Fiji	18 376	1 290 000	737 000	
<i>Guam</i>	541	218 000	140 000	
Kiribati	822	3 550 000	72 000	
Marshall Islands	181	2 131 000	48 000	
Nauru	21	310 000	9 000	
Niue	258	390 000	3 000	
<i>Nouvelle-Caledonie</i>	22 405	1 230 891	190 000	
Palau	428	616 000	17 500	
Papua New Guinea	476 500	3 120 000	4 100 000	
<i>Pitcairn</i>	5	800 000	50	
<i>Polynésie Française</i>	3 521	5 030 000	218 000	
Samoa	2 934	120 000	163 000	
Solomon Islands	29 785	1 340 000	325 000	
<i>Tokelau</i>	12	319 000	1 700	
Tonga	747	700 000	101 000	
Tuvalu	26	900 000	9 250	
Vanuatu	14 763	680 000	150 000	
<i>Wallis et Futuna</i>	255	242 700	14 400	
<i>High seas enclave 1</i>	-		-	<i>Palau/FSM/PNG/Irian Jaya</i>
<i>High seas enclave 2</i>	-		-	<i>FSM/Marshalls/Nauru/Kiribati/Tuvalu/Fiji/Vanuatu/Solomons/PNG</i>
<i>High seas enclave 3</i>	-		-	<i>Cooks/Kiribati/French Polynesia</i>

Countries in normal type are members of both the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific Community. Territories in italics are members of the Pacific Community only - need to add remaining French, American & UK territories & maybe area of any high seas enclaves-