Pacific Island Forum Input to the Thematic Review of the 2023 High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)

This document was developed with input from CROP Agencies and the UN System in the Pacific.

Introduction

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) scheduled for July 2023[1] will discuss the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The following provides the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's input to specific guiding questions on SDG 6 clean water and sanitation, SDG 7 affordable and clean energy, SDG 9 industry, innovation and infrastructure, SDG 11 sustainable cities and communities, and SDG 17 on partnerships.

Most of the inputs for this thematic review was extracted from the Second Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report 2022.

(a) Progress, experience, lessons learned, challenges and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of SDGs 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the SDGs and targets, including policy implications of their synergies and trade-offs.

SDG 6 Clean Water and Sanitation

1. Pacific communities endure some of the lowest levels of access to safe water and sanitation of any region in the world and are disproportionately impacted by the water-related impacts of disasters and climate change.

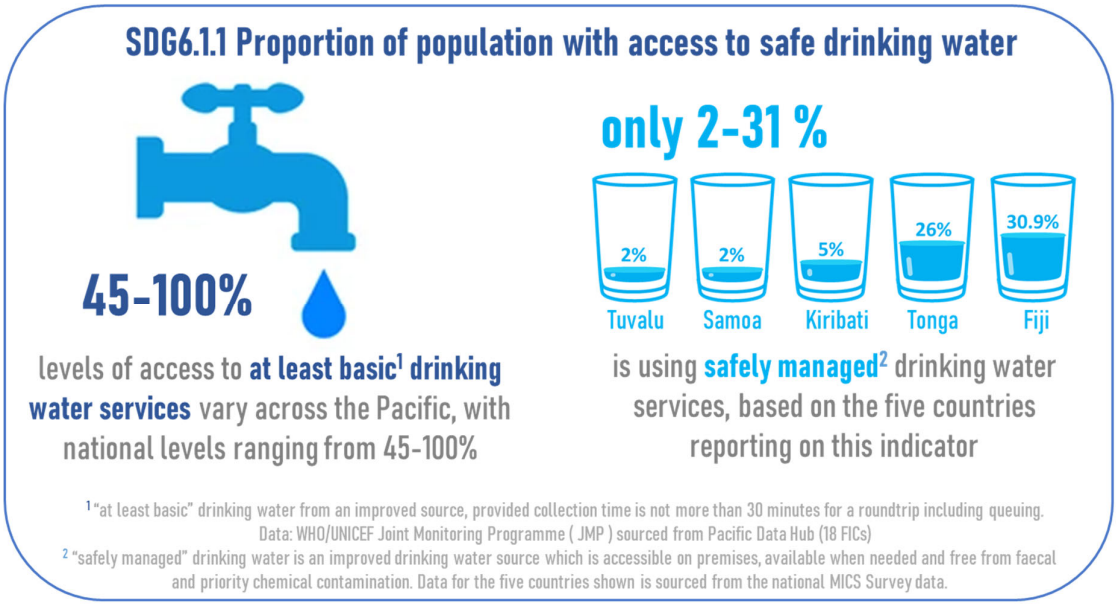
2. Data gathered by Pacific Island Countries and Territories[2] (PICT) indicate that approximately half of the Pacific population lives without access to basic drinking water facilities, and more than two thirds live without access to basic sanitation[3]. These whole-of-Pacific numbers remain relatively stagnant compared with other global regions that have seen significant improvements in access over the past decade.

3. Pacific statistics are heavily driven by the region's significant rural and outer island populations that live outside the reach of reticulated water services and face serious water security challenges compared to their urban counterparts. Urban services are also under pressure, from increasing population, underinvestment in infrastructure, pollution and water quality impacts, and limited human, natural and financial resources. Water sources face threats from increasing demand, excessive water abstraction, coastal erosion, increased seawater infiltration and droughts. Essential drinking water and wastewater infrastructure are also at risk of increasing extreme weather events, sea level rise and flooding.

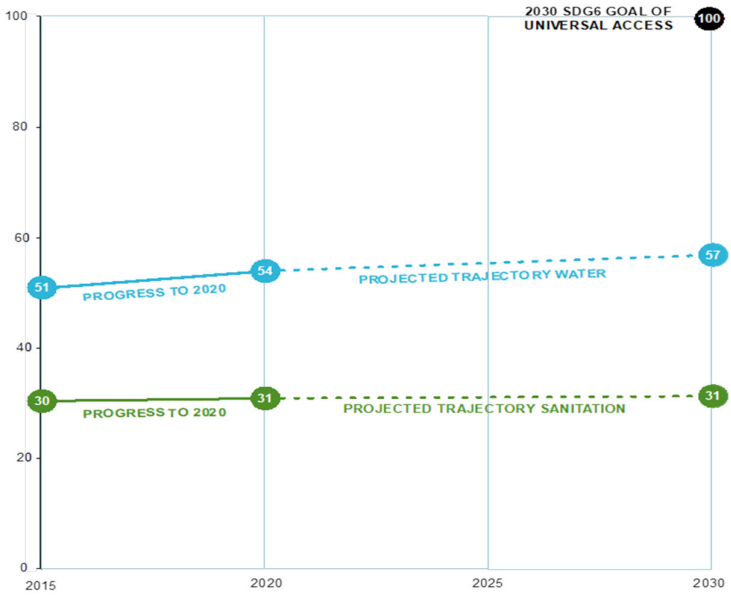
[1] The HLPF will meet under the auspices of ECOSOC from 10 to 19 July 2023 at UN Headquarters in New York, with a Ministerial Segment from 17 to 19 July.

[2] Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) data (2020) compiled by UNICEF and WHO (2021)

[3] JMP defines "basic" services as: drinking water from an improved source, provided collection time is not more than 30 minutes for a round trip, including queuing; and use of improved sanitation facilities that are not shared with other households.



4. Since 2000 the population of the Solomon Islands and PNG have increased by 275 thousand and 3.1 million respectively[4]. However, only 138 thousand and 659 thousand people gained access to basic sanitation leaving a total of over 2.5 million without basic sanitation facilities. If current trajectories persist, millions of Pacific islanders will continue to endure water insecurity for generations to come, with profound implications for public health, socio-economic development, food and energy security, the environment and human rights.



5. JMP data (2020) indicate that the Pacific as a whole (JMP Oceania sub-region, including PNG) is significantly off track in meeting the 2030 SDG6 Goal of universal access to at least basic sanitation [data source: WHO and UNICEF 2020]

[4] JMP: Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Pacific Region and Pacific Islands

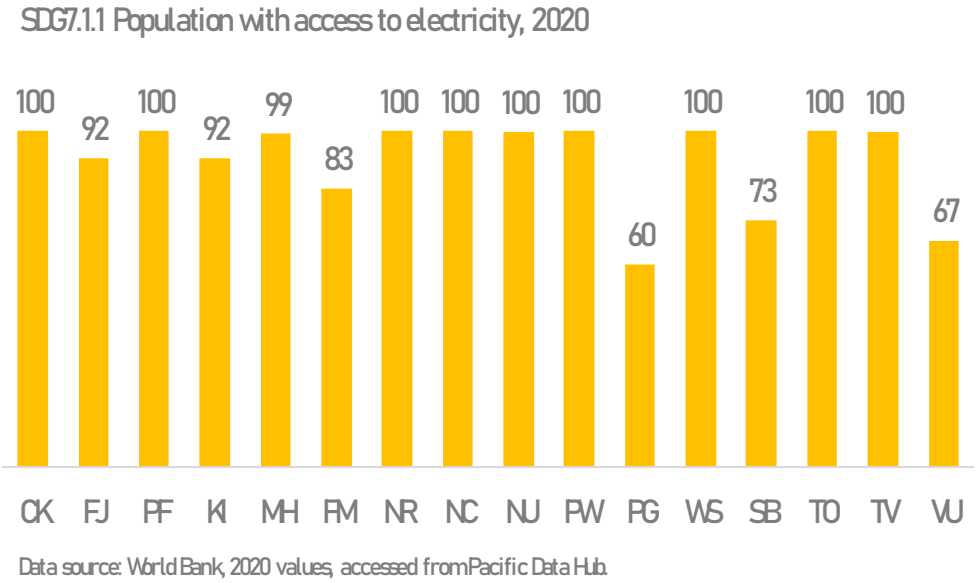
SDG 7 Affordable & Clean Energy

6. Pacific countries are developing SDG 7 roadmaps to help address the energy challenges. Fiji and Tonga have completed their Roadmaps with FSM and Kiribati set to complete theirs in 2022. The development of the Framework for Energy Security and Resilience in the Pacific (FESRIP) 2021-2030 and its subsequent endorsement by the Leaders are a milestone achievement for the region. The FESRIP priorities include Energy Policy, Planning and Capacity Development, Financing, Sustainable Electric Power Development, Low-Carbon Transport Energy, Improved Energy Efficiency, and Petroleum and Other Liquid Fuel Services. Alignment in efforts across national and regional implementation is important to ensure long-term improvements in the energy sector in the Pacific.

7. Notwithstanding the ultimate 100 percent renewable energy vision of the Pacific as a region, the continued heavy reliance on imported fossil fuels for commercial/industry-based energy requirements remain a major concern. The average regional renewable energy contribution to total energy produced is low at 17.1 percent. While the region is among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and is still largely driven by carbon intensive sources of energy, there is an opportunity if the estimated USD 6 billion spent on fossil fuel imports annually are diverted to investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency.

8. Reliance on petroleum accounts for about 72 percent of all electricity generation and essentially 100 percent for transport energy use making the Pacific the highest petroleum fuel dependency of any region in the world. Oil price volatility greatly undermines energy security in the Pacific, with increasing oil prices disproportionately affecting low-income countries. It undermines macroeconomic stability, the balance of trade, and the financial situation of major end-users such as power utilities and household disposable income. As a result of the Ukraine- Russia conflict, the world over has seen a hike in fuel costs. The Pacific has not been sheltered from these increases with domestic fuel costs increasing by more than $1 US dollar per litre in some PICTs.

9. Several Pacific governments have undertaken regulatory reforms by enacting legislations to empower regulators to regulate the energy sector to improve performance in the provision of energy services. For instance, Tonga has reduced its low-voltage network losses from 12 percent to just 5 percent. However, few PICs have seriously pursued energy efficiency to help mitigate the challenges related to climate change and heavy reliance on imported diesel fuel. The Pacific Appliance Labelling and Standards program (PALS 2019) was implemented by SPC between 2012 – 2019 and has supported ten PICTs to promote and implement Minimum Energy Performance Standards and Labelling. Fiji. Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tuvalu have enacted these standards while Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tonga, Niue and Papua New Guinea have progressed to the drafting stage.



10. Whilst most households in the Pacific have both electricity and fossil fuel access there are low-income households in most of the region that uses little petroleum fuel or electricity because of high costs. There remain significant gaps in electricity and/or fossil fuel access in some Melanesian countries with access ranging from 59-67 percent. The use of hybrid and Electric Vehicles (EVs) in the PICTs can significantly reduce carbon emissions. However, some obstacles that will have to be considered for the use of EVs in the Pacific include high vehicle costs, the need for significant expansion of electricity generation, and its reliability and affordability in both urban areas and more remote communities.

SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

11. The achievement of sustainable development in the Pacific region can be greatly facilitated through the adoption of regionally appropriate science and technology solutions that bring innovations to address the specific development challenges facing the region. In fostering Pacific innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship it is vital that appropriate recognition is given to existing traditional Pacific cultures and knowledge while ensuring that proposed solutions respect human rights principles.

12. At the regional level, the Pacific-Europe Network for Science, Technology and Innovation (PACE-Net) project brings together government and academic stakeholders, CROP and UN agencies from across the Pacific and Europe to enhance science and technology capacity in the Pacific.

13. PACE-Net is a network that promotes knowledge exchange that builds upon traditional knowledge in ways that respect traditional practices and that enhance knowledge production; provides evidence and advice to support regional activities; improves the quality of STEM teaching and raises the level of scientific competency across societies; and facilitate open access to regional scientific data for the benefit of all Pacific nations.

14. The network places a specific focus on ensuring that all policies, institutes and strategies related to innovation, science and technology are based on principles and safeguards for equity and inclusion. This includes ensuring gender equality and inclusion of people with disabilities; ensuring that research is based on principles of free, prior, informed consent; and leads to the development of protocols for intellectual property rights and access and benefits-sharing.

15. Work is underway to produce a regional roadmap for innovation, science and technology to strengthen contributions in this area while enhancing Pacific regionalism and advancing sustainable development objectives. It requires a thorough understanding of the current challenges, actors and capacity in the Pacific.

16. The broadband divide continues to widen within and between the Pacific, other parts of Asia and globally in fixed- and mobile-broadband with the most recent information on market shares (i.e. subscription per 100) showing differences within the region and between fixed and mobile broadband. Affordability, measured as a percentage of gross national income (GNI) spent on broadband services (i.e. less than 2 percent indicates affordability), is a challenge for the Pacific. Most recent figures show Tonga (2.5 percent) and Fiji (2.7 percent) as the most affordable of the PICTs, which reflects the high mobile-broadband penetration (59 and 148 per 100), respectively. PNG (10.7 percent), FSM (10.6 percent), and Solomon Islands (12 percent) are the least affordable of the PICTs.

17. The capacity of the ICT sector to implement and sustain digital transformation needs strengthening and requires multi-sectoral partnerships. USP chairs a regional ICT working group to facilitate coordination and strengthen ICT collaboration under the Pacific Regional ICT Strategic Action Plan (PRISAP). ICT Ministerial Meetings have been held in the past but there is no regular intergovernmental meeting.

18. At the national level, PNG and Tonga have well-developed plans that incorporate a range of activities, including science education in schools, community initiatives and structured science advice mechanisms for government policy. The Government of Samoa has endorsed the establishment of a science, technology and innovation policy with a particular emphasis on supporting linkages to business and supporting economic growth in the country.

19. Papua New Guinea has established a Science and Technology Council and Secretariat to support and oversee the country's National Plan and National Research Agenda. The Council and Secretariat serve as a conduit of information and communication between government, society, research and education bodies, and international institutes to bridge the gaps between science, policy, knowledge creation and technological advancement.

20. In all three countries, emphasis is given to providing strategic direction to the development of science and technology, increasing the degree to which countries themselves set the science agenda and supporting the development and commercialization of technological innovation to serve social, economic and environmental needs as defined in national development strategies.

21. An immediate priority is to generate data on what works for Science Technnology & Innovation development in PICTs to be able to learn from and support these country-level initiatives. The future development of Pacific innovation, Science and Technology for and by the Pacific, must include:

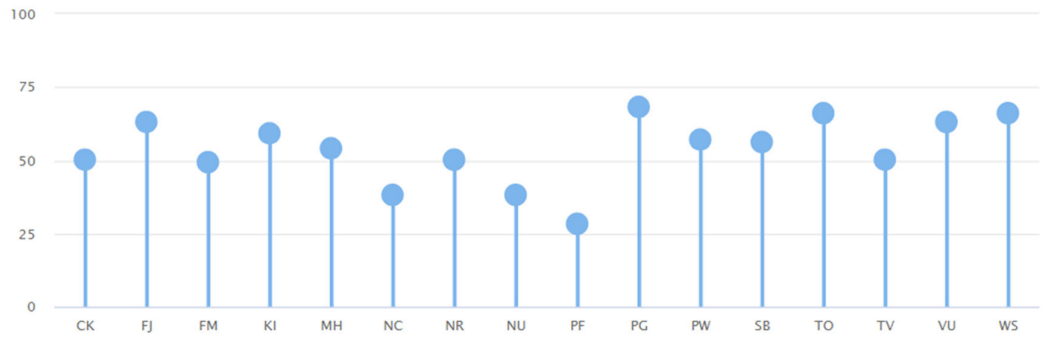
- accessible protocols for free prior, informed consent, intellectual property rights and access and benefits-sharing;
- A regional mechanism or organization to be the custodian of and facilitate open access to scientific knowledge;
- Explicit and cross-cutting safeguards and protocols for moving to gender equality in all stages of innovation, science and technology, as well as for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples;
- Programmes that recognize and foster grassroots innovations; and
- Environmental safeguards to ensure stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and its Islands.
- Leverage digital technology including geospatial technologies.

Leveraging the power of Data and Statistics

22. The 2030 Agenda and the identification of seventeen SDGs, with 169 integrated and indivisible targets brought new challenges for Pacific policy-makers, planners and statisticians. It created an unprecedented demand for data and statistical information to monitor and effectively report progress across all the SDGs. Whilst there have been some improvements in national statistical systems, many remain under-resourced to effectively collect and analyse the breadth of data and information required for evidence-based performance budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of national development policies, strategies and programmes.

23. Reporting against the global SDGs (including the Pacific subset) is still limited, but improvements in data availability and acessability have been achieved over the last two years, with 38 percent of all SDG Indicators having sufficient data to assess progress in 2021, an increase from 26 percent in 2019 (the number for the Pacific subset being even higher). With respect to the Pacific subset of SDG indicators, we saw that in the 2018 Quadrennial Report, 48 percent of the 131 SDG indicators had baseline data, increasing to 55 percent in the 2020 Biennial Report. The Pacific now has 59 percent of its indicators with baseline data.

Figure 2: Current availability (percent of the 131 Pacific SDGs in the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development) by country, based on data in the Pacific Data Hub)



24. The improvement in indicator availability has been primarily the result of: (i) the engagement of Pacific countries in the Voluntary National Review process which has led to a closer alignment of national indicators to the SDGs and increased national interest in monitoring progress; (ii) tailoring of household survey instruments to the SDGs; (iii) improvements in methodologies at the global level which has seen all SDG indicators move into Tier 1 or Tier 2; and (iv) statistics training opportunities delivered by regional and global development partners.

25. Since the first Pacific Quadrennial Report, a Disaster-related statistics framework has been developed, involving the participation of several PICTs. There has also been significant progress in the Pacific reporting against the Sendai Framework Monitor, with all 12 Pacific SIDs plus Australia and New Zealand reporting in 2021 on progress across 280 targets, compared with only 3 SIDs reporting in 2020 against 51 targets.

26. In the area of ocean accounting and statistics, Palau and Fiji are members of the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, which has highlighted the importance of completing a sequence of ocean accounts as an action for a sustainable ocean economy. Palau, Fiji and Samoa have begun experimenting with the development of ocean ecosystem accounting, which includes adopting the use of relevant global in combination with local data.

27. FAO and SPC have also undertaken significant work to strengthen the production of indicators on undernourishment and food insecurity and fish stocks, sustainable fisheries and illegal fishing. Several countries in the Pacific have benefited from this assistance. The Pacific Statistics Methods Board (PSMB) has developed a discussion paper on measuring poverty in the Pacific which focuses on different methods for poverty measurement. This includes deprivation methods which focus on measuring poverty through an assessment of how many “deprivations” are experienced by individuals and/or households concerning a range of specific criteria. These criteria might include factors related to education, health, asset ownership and living standards, but exclude direct assessment of expenditure/consumption. This allows countries to determine which deprivations are relevant to their setting.

28. The Pacific data through the Pacific Data Hub (PDH) provides a central, sustainable and accessible platform for cataloguing or hosting Pacific data from countries. One of the current focus is is on regional data governance. It is supported by SPC and other partners, agencies and institutions. There are currently 1.26 million data points and 1500 indicators, a significant increase from 110,000 data points and 350 indicators in mid-2020. The PDH has also proved a valuable platform for the storage and dissemination of up-to-date country COVID-19 case numbers, deaths and vaccination doses.

29. The Pacific Microdata Library located on the PDH is promoting secure data discovery and reuse, while also serving to safely archive PICT data collections. There are currently 680 surveys in the Library, with nearly 1,100 citations credited in journal articles, reports and research papers. Work is ongoing to facilitate access to this data between the countries and users.

30. Pacific countries have faced additional data demands since 2020, as governments, development partners and donors seek to understand the ongoing economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the pandemic has highlighted the value of administrative data such as trade, visitor arrivals and tourism spending, and macro-economic indicators that can be monitored quarter to quarter.

31. Additionally, specific surveys were conducted in the region to track responses to, and socio-economic impacts of, COVID-19 such as the World Bank-supported high-frequency phone surveys in PNG and the Solomon Islands, UN Women rapid assessment surveys in Samoa and the Solomon Islands, and SPC/StatsNZ rapid assessment surveys in the realm countries of Niue, Cook Islands and Tokelau.

32. Pacific Island Countries & Territories(PICTs) are scheduled to conduct 44 national household statistical collections between 2022 and 2025, to enhance national monitoring and evidence-based decision-making, and meet regional and global reporting requirements. A small number of collections planned for 2021 were deferred to 2022 or later due to pandemic restrictions, but overall, most PICTs were able to continue data activities as planned.

33. ESCAP is also supporting national SDG monitoring improvements through the development of a "National SDG Tracker" tool that facilitates the development of a national SDG indicator set, setting national target values and analysing data to produce SDG progress dashboards at Goal and target levels.

34. Statistics development in the Pacific has been guided by the Ten-Year Pacific Statistics Strategy (TYPSS) 2010-2020 which has led to improvements in the timely collection of core social and economic official statistics across the PICTs. To replace TYPSS, a new Strategic Framework (TYPSS 2) is being prepared with a focus on Capability Development; Improved Data Quality; Coordinated Support; Improved Statistical Literacy; and Access to Data. Phase 2 TYPSS will encourage all donors and development partners to align their activities and investments with this new framework.

35. Extensive collaboration coordinated by SPC, PIFS and ESCAP to develop additional indicators to monitor progress against the SAMOA pathway, has involved several UN and CROP agencies, to ensure aspects relating to relevance and measurability of these indicators are met.

36. SPC has received financing, USD 4.5 million equivalent, from the World Bank toward the cost of the 'Statistical Innovation and Capacity Building in the Pacific Islands' (PACSTAT) Project. The project has an overall development objective to improve the quality of welfare data collection and accessibility to comparable welfare data in the Pacific Island Countries, through supporting the adoption of improved methods by National Statistics Offices and promoting context-appropriate innovation in the region to reduce the costs and complexity of collecting socioeconomic data in the Pacific.

37. Pacific island countries are engaging more extensively in steering groups and partnerships globally and regionally driving the production of statistics across several areas including Populations and Social Statistics, Civil Registration and Vital Statistics and Oceans to name a few. Membership at the highest level includes Samoa in the UN Statistics Commission and Tonga and Nauru Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators.

SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

38. Marine pollution is a significant threat to the Pacific, and discarded plastic waste is considered one of the priority marine pollution issues facing the region. Effective management of solid waste (MSW) in Pacific developing member countries (DMCs) is difficult because of several country-specific characteristics. These include limited land area, customary land ownership; environmental fragility; limited human and financial capacity; and in some countries, a heavy reliance on tourism. The problems are particularly evident on small atoll islands where there is little land available for landfill waste

disposal and such activities are impacting potable groundwater resources. The challenges mean that selecting technologies that are appropriate to the physical and socioeconomic context of the Pacific is critical for improving solid waste management (SWM) in the region.

39. Pacific States and territories are affected not only by waste produced locally but also by waste transported in by foreign vessels and by ocean currents. Remote, uninhabited island ecosystems show impacts of marine pollution and the physical presence of debris. Approximately 80 percent of marine debris originates from land-based activities, with inputs from shorelines or via rivers and wastewater pipelines. Inputs at sea may be from normal operations, accidental losses, or deliberate discarding such as derelict vessels. Sources include street and beach littering; improper waste management; ships including fishing vessels; aquaculture; offshore drilling; at-sea accidents; extreme natural events; construction; and coastal tourism. The Pacific also has a nuclear heritage, with aging storage, e.g. on Bikini Atoll, and thousands of underwater shipwrecks that, if disturbed by natural disasters, could leak oil[5].

40. The most prevalent (60–80 percent) types of marine debris are plastic materials, considered a priority marine pollution issue facing the Pacific region. Some plastics begin as chemically inert (non-toxic) but may adsorb heavy metals and other persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances (PBT). Microplastics are a subset of the marine debris issue. Some microplastics are purposefully manufactured for industrial and domestic purposes ('primary' microplastics). 'Secondary' microplastics are created by the weathering and fragmentation of larger plastic objects. Additional sources of microplastics include industrial emissions and sewage; cosmetics and personal care products; textiles and clothing (synthetic fibres); terrestrial transport (dust from tyres); and plastic producers and fabricators (plastic resin pellets used in plastics manufacture).

41. Microplastics are often mistaken for food by a wide range of marine species, affecting their health and passing accumulated PBT up the food chain upon consumption, including human food sources. There is substantial illegal discard of wastes by vessels in South Pacific waters, despite existing conventions such as MARPOL, London Dumping Protocol and the Noumea Convention Dumping Protocol regulating the discard of waste from shipping and fishing vessels. SPC/FFA Observer GEN-6 Forms from 2003–2015 showed over 10,000 violations, primarily from purse seiners but also longliners. Plastic discharge constituted 71 percent of these violations, and 71 percent of the incidents were from fishing vessels flagged by distant water fishing nations.

42. Many PICs have no current systematic management plan or system for marine litter prevention, management, and cleanup/recovery. The problem is growing – a global review found a 49 percent increase in reports of marine species being entangled in and ingesting marine debris between 1997 and

[5] https://www.businessinsider.com/marshall-islands-nuclear-dome-radioactive-waste-11

2015. A recent study of the ingestion of plastic by fish in the Pacific region found plastic ingestion by 97 percent of examined fish species. Additional research should target identified priority topics.

43. Waste generation for the entire Pacific urban population was estimated at over 1.16 million tons in 2013 and is projected to be more than 1.59 million tons by 2025. This includes an average of 44 percent of organic waste which generates unpleasant odours, pest infestations, and spreads diseases. As it decomposes, organic waste generates methane, a gas that contributes significantly to global warming. It is estimated that nearly 90 percent of ocean litter is from land-based sources which are having detrimental impacts on the health of oceans and marine life.

44. Only 47 percent of national populations across 18 PICTS have access to regular collection services. This is mainly populations in the rural areas and providing consistent and reliable waste collection services in rural areas and outer islands of many PICTs remains a challenge. Whilst recycling is a viable response to household rubbish disposal, there is little to none being set up in PICTs. Recycling initiatives in several countries, including FSM, Palau and Kiribati, have resulted in a substantial volume of waste being taken offshore. Recycling plants require substantial investment in infrastructure, capacity and maintenance and in some atoll nations where land availability is also a challenge due to high population densities setting up these types of facilities could be an issue.

45. Over 90 percent of world trade is carried across the world's oceans by some 90,000 marine vessels[6]. This generates a substantial amount of pollution that threatens coastal environments. Like all modes of transportation that use fossil fuels, ships produce carbon dioxide emissions that significantly contribute to global climate change and acidification. Besides carbon dioxide ships also release a handful of other pollutants that contribute to the problem. This includes pollution of water and air from fuel spills, waste dumping, and exhaust, biofouling on hulls and invasive species, inadequate facilities to receive ships' waste; vessel grounding and sinking, noise pollution in water and air and collision with marine fauna.

46. To address the concerning issue of marine pollution, in 2017 Pacific Leaders committed to the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastic and Styrofoam packaging. As of June 2022, twenty countries have put in place or intend to enact measures to ban the sale and distribution of single-use plastics and Styrofoam packaging. In Vanuatu legislation has been put into place to ban the use, manufacture and of single-use plastic bags and polystyrene takeaway food containers; Palau and Samoa have banned the use of single-use bags; and Fiji has 'user-fees' to discourage the use of plastics.

47. There is a lack of the specialized resources needed for the management, treatment and disposal of persistent, hazardous chemicals at a local level, and a lack of awareness of the hazardous nature of these chemicals at the community or farm scale, which often contributes to their unsafe use and storage. Whilst current measures, legislations and policies are seeking to address the issue of waste disposal in the Pacific enforcement and prosecution remain a challenge.

[6] https://europe.oceana.org/en/shipping-pollution-1

SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals

48. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for a whole-of-society approach to development that builds on the collective actions of all stakeholders to deliver long-lasting solutions for people and the planet while leaving no one behind. Improved development cooperation is recognised as one of the important elements of a means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. It is reflected in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), which calls for continued efforts to improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of development cooperation while recognizing the importance of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC). Goal 17 calls for the strengthening of the means of implementation and revitalizing the global partnership for sustainable development. The Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development is the Pacific region's plan to implement the 2030 Agenda, including the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway.

49. Both Forum member countries and development partners in the region must align their partnerships to development effectiveness principles. In particular, Forum member countries should drive donor coordination systems at the country level. The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation is the platform for global monitoring of development effectiveness. In the 2018 GPEDC monitoring 11 Pacific countries participated including Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

50. Pacific countries have undertaken many initiatives and reforms aligned with these principles to take stronger ownership and leadership of their development agenda through intensified attention to strengthening country systems, institutions and capacities for national planning, monitoring, budgeting and public financial and aid management reforms. This, in turn, helps to strengthen engagement with development partners including ensuring development is more inclusive and engaging non-state actors in the country.

51. All Pacific countries have national action plans or policies that mirror these regional commitments. All 14 Pacific countries have some form of a national plan and sector plan, public financial management reform plan and most have development cooperation policies and joint budget support matrices that guide national prioritisation and resource allocation including driving alignment and harmonization of development partners' programming with country priorities. At a national level, many Pacific Island Countries (PICs) have development cooperation policies and implementation frameworks in place, which help drive joint accountability for governments and development partners on the results of development cooperation. Some Pacific countries also have annual, biannual or quarterly dialogues with development partners to discuss the progress of the national development strategies.

52. The intentions of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as closely aligned with the global agenda on effective development cooperation. The focus of the 2050 Strategy is to strengthen the empowerment of vulnerable groups in particular women, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities which gives particular attention to leaving no one behind.

53. There is also evidence that South-South and Triangular cooperation can be useful tools for building the capacity for PICTs in the area of development effectiveness. Through the Forum Compact Peer Reviews and Peer to Peer learning Pacific governments have replicated or adopted good practices from neighbouring Pacific countries. Under the Forum Compact, thirteen PICTs underwent a peer review of their national systems and processes of planning, budgeting, public financial management

and aid management. Peer review teams included PICTs officials and a development partner representative (for some reviews there was also representation from civil society). In addition, New Zealand and Australia opened up their systems and processes for peer review by PICTs and other development partner representatives to allow PICTs to better understand how development partner policies, procedures and actions are formulated and implemented and provide feedback on how they might be adjusted to more effectively support PICTs development efforts. What is clear is that peer reviews and peer-to-peer learning work and there is high and increasing demand from Pacific governments for its use in building capacities and helping to implement already planned national reforms and initiatives.

(b) Three key areas where transformative actions for accelerated progress have been successful, and three key areas where support is most urgently needed, with regard to the cluster of SDGs under review in July 2023.

Successful actions

1. The achievement of sustainable development in the Pacific region can be greatly facilitated through the adoption of regionally appropriate science and technology solutions that bring innovations to address the specific development challenges facing the region. In fostering Pacific innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship it is vital that appropriate recognition is given to existing traditional Pacific cultures and knowledge while ensuring that proposed solutions respect human rights principles.

2. South-South and Triangular cooperation are examples of peer reviews and peer-to-peer learning that work with a high and increasing demand from Pacific governments for its use in building capacities and helping to implement already planned national reforms and initiatives

3. The intentions of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as closely aligned with the global agenda on effective development cooperation. The focus of the 2050 Strategy is to strengthen the empowerment of vulnerable groups in particular women, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities which gives particular attention to leaving no one behind. All Pacific countries have national action plans or policies that mirror international and regional commitments. All 14 Pacific countries have some form of a national plan and sector plan, public financial management reform plan and most have development cooperation policies and joint budget support matrices that guide national prioritisation and resource allocation including driving alignment and harmonization of development partners' programming with country priorities.

Support is urgently needed.

1. Pacific access to safe water and sanitation is given water-related impacts of disasters and climate change.

2. There is a lack of the specialized resources needed for the management, treatment and disposal of persistent, hazardous chemicals at a local level, and a lack of awareness of the hazardous nature of these chemicals at the community or farm scale, which often contributes to their unsafe use and storage. Whilst current measures, legislations and policies are seeking to

address the issue of waste disposal in the Pacific enforcement and prosecution remain a challenge.

3. The broadband divide continues to widen within the Pacific and between the Pacific, other parts of Asia-Pacific and globally in fixed- and mobile-broadband with the most recent information on market shares (i.e. subscription per 100) showing differences within the region and between fixed and mobile broadband. The capacity of the ICT sector to implement and sustain digital transformation needs strengthening and requires multi-sectoral partnerships.

4. The 2030 Agenda created an unprecedented demand for data and statistical information to monitor and effectively report progress across all the SDGs. Many national statistical systems remain under-resourced to effectively collect and analyse the breadth of data and information required for evidence-based performance budgeting, monitoring and evaluation of national development policies, strategies and programmes.

5. An immediate priority is to generate data on what works for Science Technology & Innovation development in PICTs to be able to learn from and support these country-level initiatives.

(c) Examples of specific actions taken to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic that also accelerate progress towards multiple SDG targets, including actions identified by your intergovernmental body, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving SDGs.

Pacific Islands Forum leaders responded to the pandemic by invoking the Biketawa Declaration in April 2020 given the prioritisation of human security and humanitarian assistance under the Boe Declaration. This included the establishment of the Pacific Humanitarian Pathway on COVID-19 as the regional response mechanism and ensuring coordination among PICTs and regional and international development partners. It involved funding and support for medical and humanitarian needs, including national preparedness for vaccines.

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified existing vulnerabilities. Pacific food systems are vulnerable to external shocks and exacerbated food security and nutrition challenges. Whilst initial concerns about the stability of national food stocks did not translate into acute food shortages, lockdowns and movement restrictions had some immediate food and nutrition security impacts, including market and transport restrictions disrupting local food distribution (FAO, et al., 2021a).

UNICEF reports that the Pacific region is estimated to have 800,000 learners from early childhood education to higher levels who would have experienced learning disruptions and delays. Education programmes were implemented online and through media such as TV and radio. Online learning was difficult in countries such as PNG, Fiji, Samoa, and Tonga, with high rates of children with impairments across all countries being the most affected.

As part of the response packages, Pacific countries allocated special budgets and stimulus packages for health care, unemployment, business operations, social insurance and other assistance. Traditional social protection systems, social structures and community safety nets were also active in supporting communities and families experiencing difficulties.

In total 14 categories of social protection measures were implemented at varying levels across the region. Many were created during the pandemic to provide immediate and short-term assistance for the unemployed, elderly, informal sector and small business operators and students. Some countries offered more cover than others. This effort involved governments, Civil Society Organisations, churches and community networks, alumni associations, and the private sector.

The pandemic has shown that innovative solutions and increased investments are needed to address social vulnerabilities and inequalities in the areas of health and well-being; economic recovery; education; employment pathways; inclusive social protection systems; sustainable livelihoods; and food systems as well as access to justice.

(d) Assessment of the situation at the mid-point of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and within the respective areas addressed by your intergovernmental body, and policy recommendations, commitments and cooperation measures for promoting a sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery from the pandemic while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Sustainable Development requires actions from several areas. These are:

People

1. A comprehensive analysis of **employment options** across the region, that considers in detail the labour and training situation in each PICT, in particular for youth; the role of education and training initiatives such as TVET; the potential intra-regional employment opportunities that include issues linked to visas and work permits; and the economic and social costs and benefits of labour mobility schemes for both source and recipient countries.

2. Expanded research and development and capacity in the region to design, implement and monitor **formal social protection systems** to best address the impact on vulnerable communities in the region most impacted by climate change, disasters and health pandemics/epidemics.

3. Strengthened existing **youth** councils and networks and ensure representation of the diversity of young people in the public sphere to bring about a better tailored, needs-based and human rights-based approach in dealing with development issues in the region.

4. Address **gender equality** in PICTs by implementing the 14th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women Outcomes Statement, endorsed at the inaugural Pacific Island Forum Women Leaders Meeting, with a focus on women's economic empowerment, gender-based violence and gender-responsive climate justice; while continuing to promote women in leadership and decision-making; their role in addressing crises and disasters; and the importance of sex, age and disability-disaggregated data.

5. An urgent and sustained response is required to address the region's **water and sanitation** issues. There is a need for more accurate data and information; strengthened local capacities to maintain safe, secure, appropriate and affordable systems and practices, paying particular attention to the needs of isolated communities and vulnerable groups and the role of women and girls; and strengthened communication, partnerships and utilisation of scientific understanding, citizen science and traditional knowledge of water resources to manage risks

associated with water quality, overuse and extreme events. sector, and civic, religious and political leaders.

Planet

6. Continued regional advocacy to seek the global commitment to decisive **climate action** that limits global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius together with continuing advocacy for the ground-breaking 2021 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-level rise.

7. Increased capacity, particularly amongst key national response agencies to improve **coordination with international and regional humanitarian partners and donor governments** in response efforts to disaster events in the Pacific region.

8. Strengthened partnerships for **energy security and resilience** in the region, including between SIDS to address issues of Utilities Grid Readiness for High Penetration of variable renewable energy; financial and management mechanisms for the sustainability of outer island and remote rural electrification; **Land and sea transport decarbonisation** through non-motorised transport, E-mobility, etc; enhancing Independent Energy Regulation through the Office of the Pacific Energy Regulators Alliance (OPERA); strengthening the Productive use of Energy to Support Economic Growth and well-being; and the development of Pacific Renewable Energy Standards for Hurricanes and Natural Disasters.
9. Support for the development of national systematic management plans, systems and enforcement measures for solid waste management and marine litter prevention, management and clean up/recovery.

10. Strengthened efforts to increase **climate adaptation** and **biodiversity** knowledge and Pacific capacity for Pacific-led management of the region's climate adaptation and biodiversity, incorporating local and traditional knowledge and practice.

Prosperity

11. Support the outcomes of the Pacific Regional Debt Conference which included the need for more innovative and climate-friendly revenue-generating initiatives; increased public-private dialogue on SOE reforms; exploration of lessons learned on sustainable financing mechanisms to prevent a drain on fiscal resources; and the potential for multiple funding sources to be harmonised and aligned to members' needs.

12. Continued commitment to the implementation of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (2021-2030) which calls for a holistic approach to tourism development, management and monitoring.

13. Continued implementation of the Regional Sustainable **Fisheries** Roadmap and the Regional Longline Fisheries Strategy, noting the forthcoming updated report to Leaders on the independent review of the Roadmap's goal to increase economic returns from fisheries.

Means of Implementation

14. Development of **Innovation, Science and Technology** for and by the Pacific, which includes: accessible protocols for free prior, informed consent, intellectual property rights and access and benefits-sharing; a regional mechanism or organization to be the custodian of and facilitate

open access to scientific knowledge; explicit and cross-cutting safeguards and protocols for moving to gender equality in all stages of innovation, science and technology, as well as for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples; programmes that recognize and foster grassroots innovations; and environmental safeguards to ensure stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and its Islands.

15. Importance of **inclusive, transparent and accountable partnerships** that include civil society, private sector and development partners by: increasing the use and capacity of country systems in the delivery of development cooperation; enabling south-to-south cooperation and peer-to-peer learning across the Pacific; addressing effective enabling environment and legislative and regulative barriers; and having a strengthened focus on systematic dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives.

16. Digitalization is a key means of innovation to enhance communication infrastructure and bureaucratic processes that make it difficult to readily access such information.

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Political Declaration of the September 2023 SDG Summit.

The overall key message from the Pacific is for our global collective family to do all that is necessary to achieve our climate change target of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Pacific Island challenges are intensifying and accelerating because we as a global collective are still unable to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

On that note, Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific are not on track with an urgent need for sustained financial and technical support to improve statistical data and capacity. The current data suggest that the Pacific will only achieve 20% of SDG targets by 2030.

On the specific goals 6, 7, 9, 11, 17.

The following is a summary of our Pacific key message

1. Increased investment in clean water and sanitation.
2. Exploration of the sustainable energy transition.
3. Strengthened local governance and urban management.
4. Development of financial inclusion strategies and tailored technology-led services.
5. Improvements to the availability of data and statistics and regional guidelines.
6. Climate action and ambition.

On a more detailed note the Pacific needs:

- An urgent and sustained response is required to address the Pacific region's **water and sanitation** issues. There is a need for more accurate data and information; strengthened local capacities to maintain safe, secure, appropriate and affordable systems and practices, paying particular attention to the needs of isolated communities and vulnerable groups and the role of women and girls; and strengthened communication, partnerships and utilisation of scientific understanding, citizen science and traditional knowledge of water resources to manage risks associated with water quality, overuse and extreme events. sector, and civic, religious and political leaders.

- Strengthened partnerships for **energy security and resilience** in the Pacific region, including between SIDS to address issues of Utilities Grid Readiness for High Penetration of variable renewable energy; financial and management mechanisms for the sustainability of outer island and remote rural electrification; **Land and sea transport decarbonisation** through non-motorised transport, E-mobility, etc; enhancing Independent Energy Regulation through the Office of the Pacific Energy Regulators Alliance (OPERA); strengthening the Productive use of Energy to Support Economic Growth and well-being; and the development of Pacific Renewable Energy Standards for Hurricanes and Natural Disasters.

- Continued regional advocacy to seek the global commitment to decisive **climate action** that limits global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius together with continuing advocacy for the ground-breaking 2021 Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate Change-related Sea-level rise.

- Increase capacity, particularly amongst key national response agencies to improve **coordination with international and regional humanitarian partners and donor governments** in response efforts to disaster events in the Pacific region.

- Support for the development of national systematic management plans, systems and enforcement measures for solid waste management and marine litter prevention, management and clean up/recovery.

- Strengthened efforts to increase **climate adaptation** and **biodiversity** knowledge and Pacific capacity for Pacific-led management of the region's climate adaptation and biodiversity, incorporating local and traditional knowledge and practice.

- Development of **Innovation, Science and Technology** for and by the Pacific, which includes: accessible protocols for free prior, informed consent, intellectual property rights and access and benefits-sharing; a regional mechanism or organization to be the custodian of and facilitate open access to scientific knowledge; explicit and cross-cutting safeguards and protocols for moving to gender equality in all stages of innovation, science and technology, as well as for people with disabilities, ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples; programmes that recognize and foster grassroots innovations; and environmental safeguards to ensure stewardship of the Pacific Ocean and its Islands.

- Importance of **inclusive, transparent and accountable partnerships** that include civil society, private sector and development partners by: increasing the use and capacity of country systems in the delivery of development cooperation; enabling south-to-south cooperation and peer-to-peer learning across the Pacific; addressing effective enabling environment and legislative and regulative barriers; and having a strengthened focus on systematic dialogue and engagement with all stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives.

End.