



Emerging Indo-Pacific Leaders Call for Coalition to End Single-Use Plastics

MARINE PLASTIC POLICY BRIEF

Contributors:

Rachel Steele (Tonga), lesiele@gmail.com, Alyssa Manalo (Philippines), asaremanalo@gmail.com, Ana Tagivetaua, (Fiji), dtagivetaua088@gmail.com, Aye Yupar (Myanmar), aye.yupar@gmail.com, Putri Hadini Mayningsih (Indonesia), ningsihputri880@gmail.com, Shirlene Hiru (Solomon Islands), shirlenehiru12@gmail.com.

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We, the members of the Leaders Free and Open Indo-Pacific programme, call upon stakeholders to form this Coalition to concisely address the existential threat of single-use plastic through coordinated, evidence-based action that bridges our diverse experiences, innovations, and traditional knowledge.

Marine Plastic & Waste Leaders, FOIP 2024



KEY POLICY MESSAGES

The fight against single-use plastics demands unified action across the Indo-Pacific.

Bridge Critical Knowledge Gaps
Strategic Global Advocacy
Grassroots Implementation

The Shimanami Collective has cultivated a dynamic network of regional leaders uniquely positioned to serve as connectors across our diverse regions.



60%

global population is from Asia-Pacific



81%

marine plastic comes from Asia



98%

SUP made from fossil fuels



40%

of all plastic waste is packaging



10%

waste is recycled in Asia-Pacific



22%

of plastics leak into ecosystems

Source: Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2022). *Global plastics outlook: Policy scenarios to 2060*. OECD Publishing (cont.)

THE ESCALATING PLASTIC CRISIS

The marine plastic crisis highlights a deeply unsustainable reliance on fossil fuels and single-use plastics (SUP), plastic items used only once before discarded. The Indo-Pacific region stands at the epicenter of a growing marine plastic crisis with **15 of the world's 20 most polluting rivers located in Asia**, channeling **80% of ocean plastics** from land-based sources.

Current regional initiatives like the **ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris** and the **Pacific Regional Action Plan** have been hindered by fragmented implementation and coordination. Alarming, 98% of SUPs never biodegrade; they fragment permanently into microplastics, depositing in our bodies, food and water systems – permanently trapped in our ecosystems.

WHY DO WE NEED A COALITION?

Our region faces common, yet critical, challenges that no single actor can solve alone:

Fragmented policies
Fragmented implementation
Limited infrastructure
Weak coordinating mechanisms
Plastic never biodegrade

A newly created Coalition will strengthen the unification of regional cooperation on these issues.

CHALLENGE OF OUR LIFETIME

In addition to humanity's current polycrises, the increasing production of SUP will bring **permanent harm** through ecosystem disruptions, biodiversity loss, economic damage, and uncharted public health risks.

SUP pose severe environmental security threats across the Asia-Pacific region, undermining progress toward multiple Sustainable Development Goals, particularly **SDGs 6, 13, 14, and 15**. With production forecasted to triple by 2030, SUPs contradict commitments to protect and restore land and ocean ecosystems as outlined in other international sustainability instruments such as the **Convention on Biological Diversity, UNCLOS**, and leading economic forum policies, such as the **G20 Osaka Blue Ocean Policy**.

The critical environmental threats cascade into substantial economic and social security risks, which disproportionately affect marginalized communities and **contradict SDG 5's focus on gender equality, disability, and social inclusion**. For smaller Asia-Pacific nations, plastic pollution damages fisheries and tourism—critical economic sectors. Plastics have entered the food chain, affecting human health and marine life.



OUR REGION AT A GLANCE

The most critical challenges surrounding (SUP) in the Asia-Pacific region include a **lack of knowledge brokerage** across stakeholders to create **holistic coordination mechanisms**, to share **ongoing lessons learned** and collective **policy alignment**.

While several countries have introduced bans or reduction strategies, enforcement remains a significant challenge since policies are fragmented and there is a lack of national coordination. Additionally, rural and remote areas struggle with access to plastic-free alternatives, limiting the effectiveness of bans.

Strengths in the region span from market-driven strategies to pioneering global policy advocacy. **ASEAN strategies focus on systems-level change** through circular economy policies, particularly Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) frameworks that engage industry in developing solutions. **Pacific nations prioritize strict regulations**,

such as outright bans on plastic bags and straws, to mitigate the severe impact of marine plastic pollution. Some ASEAN countries and local governments have also passed ordinances on the use of plastic bags in stores, malls, and certain tourist destinations. Reusable bags and baskets were offered as alternatives. Both frameworks aim to reduce plastic waste, ASEAN's reliance on voluntary compliance presents challenges in achieving widespread adoption, whereas the regulatory approach, despite being stricter, faces issues related to enforcement capacity and resource availability.

REGION-LED GLOBAL ADVOCACY

To find support for stronger implementation mechanisms that protect marine ecosystems, the *Pacific Way* has **historically led global environmental advocacy**, including catalysing the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement (BBNJ), advancing the Ecocide movement at the International Criminal Court (ICC), and in the face of rising sea levels, calling for urgent negotiations in 1989 — a pivotal step that ultimately established the UNFCCC together with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and UN Convention to Combat Desertification at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

RECOMMENDATION

By creating the Free and Open Indo-Pacific Coalition, working towards eliminating SUP, government officials, public- and private-sector employees and individuals across all sectors will have a platform to leverage the Shimanami Collective cohort structure.

With an aim to continue scaling impact beyond individual programme cycles, strengthening our regional influence while respecting diverse regional challenges and solutions. As nations across the Indo-Pacific region individually advance policies and implementation strategies to address SUP, we recognise the overarching and urgent need for coordinated action bridging successful implementation stories and networks of change with similar contexts.

THE WAY FORWARD

PHASE 1
2026

Launch FOIP Coalition

- **Community of Practice** (online) for SUP interventions;
- **Exchange program** to connect high potential emerging leaders with scalable projects in similar contexts;
- Create **sister programme** to pair successful ASEAN waste management models with Pacific communities.

PHASE 2
2027

Connect Unified Advocacy Teams

- Form a **coordinated working group** for upcoming events, such as WCEF2025, to leverage combined expertise and representation;
- **Create pre-summit coordination mechanisms** for climate and environmental negotiations, such as UN Plastics Treaty;
- Establish an **anticipatory regional rapid response team** to assess emerging plastic pollution issues and develop unified positions.

PHASE 3
2030

Regional Circular Economy Trade Network

- Preferential **trade agreements for circular economy materials** across the Indo-Pacific;
- Advance progress for **eco-modulation incentives** supporting preferential trade agreements for recycled materials, regional packaging standards, and EPR frameworks.

COALITION STRATEGIC PILLARS

1 **Bridge Critical Knowledge Gaps**

2 **Strategic Advocacy and Pathfinding**

3 **Grassroots Action and Implementation**

HOW TO RESOURCE THIS WORK

Finance Flows

- Packaging Tax **via** import duties for manufacturers and distributors
- Plastics Tax **via** EPR fees levied on petrochemical companies and plastic producers

Matched Funds

- Government Contributions
- Regional development grants
- Multilateral Development Banks
- Climate finance mechanisms

Sponsored Participation

- World Circular Economy Forum
- ASEAN Circular Economy Forum
- Pacific Ocean Pacific Climate Change Conference

Knowledge partnerships

- Pacific Climate Change Centre
- ASEAN
- MacArthur Foundation
- Global Environment Facility
- Global Green Growth Institute

BUILDING ON EXISTING FOUNDATIONS

These recommendations acknowledge and seek to enhance:

Implementation place-based impact

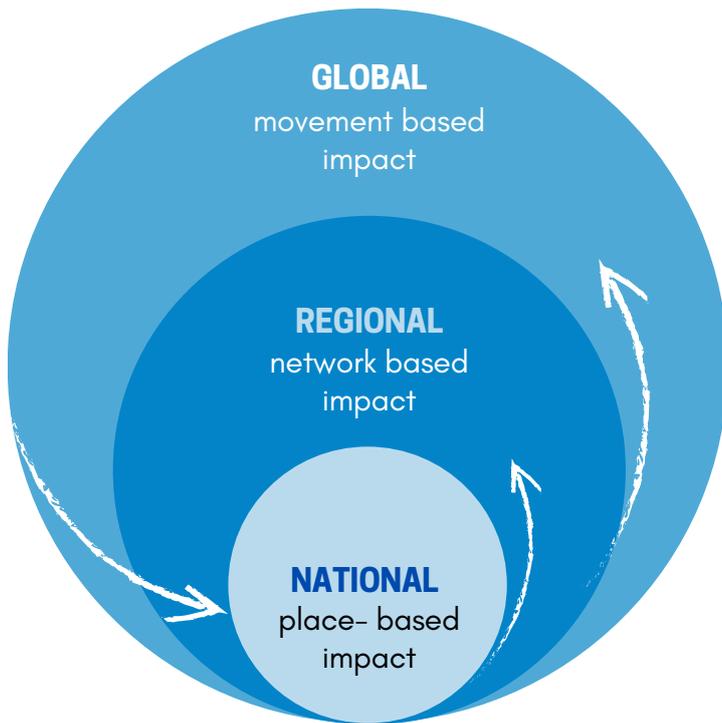
National action plans which are already in place across our member states

Scalable Network-based impact

Regional frameworks, such as the ASEAN Framework of Action on Marine Debris and the Pacific Regional Action Plan

Global Movement-based impact

Building momentum for Indo-Pacific nations to align with global initiatives including the UN Global Plastics Treaty negotiations and G20 Against Marine Plastic Litter Implementation Framework



BUSINESS AS USUAL

147%

Increase in plastics entering our oceans between 2016 - 2024

7%

Continuing BAU will reduce plastics entering our oceans by 2040

Source: 2050 Under the G20 OSAKA BLUE Version

OUTCOMES

By rejecting business as usual, we can co-create a future in support of protecting:

PILLAR 1

50%

reduction of business SUP consumption by 2030

PILLAR 2

50%

plastic removed from waste management streams by 2030

PILLAR 3

50%

reduction in marine plastic by 2030

Act now. Reduce 82% of plastics entering our oceans by 2040.

*Let's move together from crisis to innovative action.
Activate the Shimanami Coalition to end SUP and
to create a resilient, safer and prosperous Asia-Pacific*

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