THEME **Environmental Governance**

INDICATOR **MEA Reporting Requirements**

DEFINITION	% of MEA reporting requirements met on time
PURPOSE	Determine if MEAs are being reported on
DESIRED OUTCOME	100% of MEA reporting requirements met on time or positive trend. PICTs successfully meet reporting obligations under MEAs in a timely manner, ideally using the State of Environment Reporting as the basis for responding to these reporting requirements

Status
Poor to fair

Trend
Mixed

Data confidence
Medium


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PRESENT STATUS

The number of multilateral environment agreements (MEAs) varies by country, with at least 20 MEAs for the Pacific islands region (Annex C). Pacific leaders have adopted the Convention on Biological Diversity with its Aichi Targets (2011–2020), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and several other global, regional, and national commitments that rely on resourced environmental management.

Information on MEAs can now be accessed on a web-based portal (https://www.informea.org/en), although not all available reports have been uploaded. Even within individual Convention systems, collations of existing reports are not up to date.

Reporting is lagging despite regional prioritization of the issues addressed by the MEAs (Table 2.1). For example, all Pacific island countries have submitted only their second National Communication to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but the next report is overdue for several countries. Only about 31% of the required MEA reports have been submitted in 2015 or more recently.

Based on MEA reporting being over five years out of date for more than half of MEAs as well as the lack of data for roughly half of the SDG indicators (Sustainable Development Report 2020), the present status of this indicator is considered *poor to fair* with *mixed* trends among countries. The availability and clarity of the data provide *medium* confidence; in some cases, the lack of access to submitted reports is under the control of the MEA secretariat.

For comparison, at the global level, 46% of parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity have submitted the most recent required report (due December 2018).

Support for Pacific reporting is provided in part through the African Caribbean Pacific Multilateral Environment Agreement 3 (ACP MEA 3) Project. The Global Environment Facility funds the Inform Project, which is creating a regional data portal and national data portals for the 14 Pacific island countries to help streamline data sharing and access to further support national and MEA reporting. The project is also creating online indicator reporting tools and defined national level indicators which address multiple reporting requirements.

PRESSURES & OPPORTUNITIES

Sustained monitoring using consistent approaches over the long term is essential for streamlined reporting and to identify patterns of ecosystem health. That said, adaptive management requires the flexibility to respond to new priorities and emerging issues. Meanwhile, the enormity and severity of pressing environmental needs and the impacts of climate change demand immediate results.

The sheer number of required reports and international meetings is challenging for countries with small bureaucracies that face limitations of qualified negotiators and human resources to implement action at home. With their small populations and limited environmental management resources, the islands face key challenges for knowledge management with high staff turnover and limited staff time for reporting. The Pacific vulnerability to natural disasters also extends to data and knowledge: both paper and digital records are susceptible to loss.

International climate and environmental problems are not yet tackled holistically, and implementation is often disjointed and unsustainable in the long run. Complicated reporting, unharmonized indicators, or global indicators that are not relevant for the Pacific region add to the MEA reporting burden.

Priorities of bilateral donors and partners are often swayed by geopolitical interests instead of addressing pressing needs of developing countries or international agreements (such as MEA targets). This problem is compounded by the Pacific region's heavy reliance on foreign aid, which can create competition within the region to access limited funds, disincentivizing collaboration, coordination, and cooperation.

At the global and regional level, a lack of data can lead to a lack of visibility of the need or opportunity present in the Pacific islands. For example, the 2020 Sustainable Development Report excluded nine Pacific island countries from the SDG Index due to insufficient data availability: Federated States of Micronesia (46% of values missing), Kiribati (44%), Marshall Islands (54%), Nauru (58%), Palau (57%), Solomon Islands (29%), Tonga (33%), Tuvalu (56%), and Samoa (21%).

TABLE 2.1: Most recent year of reporting from Pacific parties to international and regional MEAs relevant for environmental management, as of September 2020. Note: UNFCCC Non-Annex I Parties are required to submit their first National Communication within three years of entering the Convention, and every four years thereafter. Most Pacific island countries are due to submit their third NC. See https://unfccc.int/non-annex-I-NCs

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS	REPORTING PERIOD	Cook Is	FSM	Fiji	Kiribati	Marshall Is	Nauru	Niue	Palau	PNG	Samoa	Solomon Is	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu
SDGs: Voluntary National Review	Varies		2020	2019	2018	In preparation (2021)	2019		2019	2020	2020	2020	2019		2019
BIODIVERSITY															
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Sixth National Report was due in 2018	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2019	2014	2019	2014	2014	2014	2014	2015	2014
Conv on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)	Due every 2 years			Regional (2018)					Regional (2018)	Regional (2018)	2017	Regional (2018)	Regional (2018)		Regional (2018)
Convention on Migratory Species (CMS)	Due every 2 years	2017		2017					2017		2019				
Convention on Wetlands (RAMSAR)	Due every 2 years			2015	2018	2018			2018	2018	2019				
World Heritage Convention (WHC)	Six year cycle (active: 2018–2024)			2015	2015							2015			
Convention on Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH)	N/A (COP every two years)		None to date (ratified 2018)												
WASTE AND POLLUTION															
HAZARDOUS WASTE AND POLLUTION															
Basel Convention	Due annually	2004	2002		2006	2014	2004			2004	2016				
Stockholm Convention	Last due in 2018														
Minamata Convention	Due every three years after joining									Initial assess-ment underway	Initial assess-ment 2018				
ATMOSPHERIC POLLUTION															
Vienna Convention(MontrealProtocol)	Due annually	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2018		2019	2019	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019
SHIP-BASED POLLUTION															
London Convention Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter	Due annually, including NIL if no incidents.														
CLIMATE CHANGE															
UNFCCC	Due every 4 years*	2011	2013	2014	2013	2015	2014	2014	2019	2019	2010	2017	2012	2015	2016
LAND DEGRADATION Z															
UNCCD	Due every 4 years	2018	2014	2018	2014	2002	2018	2014	2018	2018	2018	2014	2014	2014	2014
REGIONAL AGREEMENTS															
Waigani Convention	Due every 2 years	2013	2013	2013	2013		2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013	2013
Noumea Convention	Due every 2 years					In process					2019				

Not a party; no report required | Current: within last 2 years (2018-2020) | Recent: within last 2 to 5 years (2015-2017) | Outdated: more than 5 years ago

The most concerning gaps are the lack of data to measure regional priorities of climate change, ocean and seas or "life below water", and quality education (UN ESCAP 2019). Both lack of data and lack of time to gain and share expertise can reduce Pacific representation. For example, in the production of the second world ocean assessment under the UNCLOS Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment, including Socioeconomic Aspects, only one of the hundreds of authors and peer-reviewers is a representative of the Pacific islands. Building up institutional capacity in the Pacific islands can equip Pacific people to contribute to regional and global dialogues.

Internal approval processes are a common bottleneck in the publication of State of Environment reporting, in some cases delaying the publication by years. Other national level challenges include a lack of central coordination of MEA funding and implementation and the development of mechanisms at the national level to satiate obligations under the MEA, rather than translating the global messages into a "language" that is understood and adopted at the local level.

There has been a move toward streamlined, Pacific-specific reporting. The Pacific regional framework supports efficient use of scarce resources through the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific[1], joint environmental project development, and a growing movement toward open environmental information sharing. One example of integrated regional reporting is the first quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report released in 2019, which highlights progress made in the Blue Pacific region towards achieving sustainable development within the context of seven or more frameworks and conventions.[2] The Pacific Data Ecosystem, founded by SPREP and SPC, supports cooperative knowledge management.

Many Pacific countries require financial and technical support to be in full compliance with the MEAs and frameworks to which they are a Party. Such support should be in line with Principle 2: "Conservation from a Pacific Perspective" of the Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in the Pacific Islands Region.

[1] The Pacific Community, Pacific Islands Development Forum, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and the University of the South Pacific

[2] Framework for Pacific Regionalism and national development plans and reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs; the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (S.A.M.O.A.) Pathway; the Paris Agreement; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, alongside the 2012 Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration

REGIONAL RESPONSE RECOMMENDATIONS

The range of reporting demands on small Pacific communities necessitates a flexible approach grounded in strong partnerships. For more about the financial sustainability required to meet the needs of environmental management, please see Regional Indicator: Environment Ministry budget allocation.

SPREP has long provided ad hoc technical backstopping, review, and coordination for Pacific island countries reporting to MEAs as well as working with convention secretariat officers to deliver multinational interventions in the Pacific. Coordinated and consistent SPREP support to Pacific island countries for MEA reporting, data collection and analysis, and Council of Parties (COP) preparations can support on-time reporting with better coordination across MEA indicators and sub-regional and regional interventions at COPs.

Pacific island nations continue to work together to achieve commitments at the regional and international levels. Just as essential is cooperation and coordination among government agencies within the individual Pacific islands to include the relevant stakeholders and link environment and development departments. Mainstreaming environmental efforts throughout the line ministries is valuable both for effective environmental management and for consistent, accessible data collection regarding the required indicators.

Building on existing national structures, countries can:

- Identify gaps for sustainable and timely environmental reporting;
- Share data and information products to support national and regional knowledge management;
- Create centralised data services to assist with monitoring and evaluation of conservation and management activities and to provide accessible data and indicators for environment information;
- Collaborate through South-South learning for information collection and analysis, reporting, and open and timely sharing of environmental information;
- Support the development of sustained, consistent regional coordination for MEA reporting
- Prioritise and measure spending on environmental management, distinguishing national and project funds;
- Plan for sustained environmental reporting under island conditions, including preparedness and disaster risk management;
- Negotiate for relevant and meaningful indicators for Pacific islands; and
- Partner for harmonised environmental management and reporting.

INDICATOR IN ACTION

SDG 12.4.1, 17.16, 17.18, 14.9.1 • All MEAs to which Pacific islands are Party • SAMOA Pathway • Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development • Pacific Regional Environment Objectives 1.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.2, 4.3 • Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation Objective 6

FOR MORE INFORMATION

InforMEA: https://www.informea.org/

Sustainable Development Report: https://www.sdgindex.org/

UN ESCAP (2019) Progress on the road to sustainable development in the Pacific: Executive Summary. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. ESCAP/RFSD/2019/INF/6.

SPREP PROE

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) supports 14 countries and 7 territories in the Pacific to better manage the environment. SPREP member countries and members of the Pacific Roundtable on Nature Conservation (PIRT) have contributed valuable input to the production of this indicator.
www.sprep.org

National and regional environment datasets supporting the analysis above can be accessed through the Pacific Environment Portal.
pacific-data.sprep.org

For protected areas information, please see the Pacific Islands Protected Area Portal.
pipap.sprep.org