PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM INDUSTRY STANDARD 2.0

Standards for PHASING OUT SINGLE USE PLASTICS in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry

PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT

SPTO PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION

PACIFIC OCEAN LITTER PROJECT

Australian Aid

SPREP Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

The Standards for Phasing Out Single-Use Plastics in the Pacific Tourism Industry was developed in partnership with the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) and the Australian Government-funded Pacific Ocean Litter Project, implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). Technical support was provided by the Cawthron Institute, with input from SPTO member countries, governments, industry, and partners through surveys, workshops, and consultations.

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Message From SPTO Chief Executive Officer

Warm Pacific Greetings!

The tourism sector is a pivotal economic contributor for our Pacific communities, driving job creation and foreign investment. Recovery appears promising; however, it places pressure on our natural environment. Effective waste management and pollution control are essential, as a clean environment is crucial for the success of our tourism sector. I express my support for the call from Pacific leaders advocating for a comprehensive life cycle approach that emphasises prevention and reduction strategies for the elimination of plastic pollution as articulated in the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution, reaffirming our commitment to the regional strategy, Cleaner Pacific 2025.

Tourism significantly contributes to the waste management challenges in the Pacific, emphasising the Pacific Tourism Organisation's role in advancing regional initiatives for cleaner coastal environments. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent recognises the interlinkages between economic development, our oceans and environment. At sector level, the 2030 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework provides guidance for elevating sustainable tourism priorities and action in line with these broader aspirations. Notably, Goal 4 of this framework explicitly addresses the issue of plastic waste and advocates for prevention and avoidance as the most effective control measures. Additionally, it emphasises the necessity of implementing strategies to phase out undesirable products and influencing a shift in behaviour.

The Standards for Phasing Out Single-Use Plastics (SUPs) in the Pacific Tourism Industry serve as a comprehensive resource for industry stakeholders and nations aiming to eliminate single-use plastics. They establish a benchmark and offer valuable recommendations, considerations, and actions that tourism enterprises can utilise to assess their current operations and align with best practices. They correspond to and enhance the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, as well as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria for Hotels, Destinations, and Tour Operators. These standards support a diverse range of industry stakeholders, from established enterprises to newcomers. The framework addresses the needs of both large and small to medium-sized businesses, ensuring practicality. Additionally, a certification framework and resource toolkit are available to help nations and industry stakeholders adopt sustainable practices.

On behalf of SPTO, I commend the unwavering dedication and commitment of all stakeholders involved in the development of these standards. Additionally, I express our profound gratitude to the Australian Government and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme for the funding support. We look forward to continuing this partnership through the implementation of the Standards across our Pacific Island countries.

It is imperative that all tourism operators, industry partners, communities and visitors actively collaborate and fully embrace the principles outlined in these standards. I strongly urge government stakeholders and partners to unite in advancing the objectives of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards, including the Standards for phasing out SUPs in the Pacific tourism industry.

Malo 'aupito,

Christopher Roy Cocker

Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Tourism Organisation

Message From SPREP Director General

Bula Vinaka and Talofa Lava

The Standards for Phasing-Out Single-Use Plastics in the Tourism Industry mark a significant milestone in the Pacific's journey toward sustainable development and environmental stewardship. These standards, integrated within the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF), embody the commitment of Pacific Island nations to address the impacts of the triple planetary crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, affecting our people and communities.

As tourism represents a crucial economic sector, it must balance its growth with a responsibility to protect the unique and fragile ecosystems that define our identity. To this end, I wish to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) and wider Pacific tourism sector and partners in advancing this framework.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) through the Australian Government funded Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP), is delighted to have supported SPTO in the development of the standards for the phasing out of single use plastics in the tourism sector.

The collaboration between our regional organisations represents a targeted response to our shared strategic priority of sustaining and building a resilient Pacific environment.

The growing environmental challenges posed by plastic pollution — particularly in coastal and island communities — demand immediate and collective action. For the Pacific, marine litter and plastic pollution are covered in the *Pacific Marine Litter Action Plan (MLAP) 2018-2025*, which is a subset of the *Cleaner Pacific 2025* strategy.

The standards, which have been developed in consultation with the tourism sector including industry, is complemented by a certification framework and implementation toolkit for business operators, which SPREP also supported through POLP.

This initiative represents a bold and necessary commitment to protect our environment, safeguard our oceans, and build a more resilient, sustainable future for the tourism industry. Together, we can ensure that tourism remains a force for good while preserving our natural beauty that travellers seek to experience.

I commend SPTO for its partnership and invite partners to support the work ahead.

Sa vinaka saka.

Mr Sefanaia Nawadra,

Director General SPREP

Preamble

The *Standards for Phasing-Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry* sit within Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standards. The Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard, along with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Destination Standard, provides guidance to the SPTO and its members to work towards improved sustainability in tourism as required by the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF).

Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF)

As a key economic sector, tourism benefits from a cleaner environment but it also puts pressure on the environment, oceans and its resources. Endorsed by Pacific Island tourism leaders in 2021, the 2030 Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) sets out four high-level goals for sustainable tourism development for the Pacific. Goal four of the PSTPF pursues healthy islands and oceans and this includes priorities on waste management. The *Standards for Phasing out Single-use Plastics* build on Criterion 4.2, relating to Sustainable Purchasing, and Criterion 4.9, relating to Solid Waste, within the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry Standard.

The need for a more sustainable form of tourism in the Pacific has been heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has altered the expectations of travellers and host communities and how businesses conduct their operations. Endorsed by the Council of Tourism Ministers in October 2021, the PSTPF envisions that the SPTO and its partners will lead by example on a global scale and demonstrate their commitment to sustainable tourism as the industry recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. The vision of the Pacific Nations is to ensure that:

"We are empowered by and benefitting from tourism that is resilient, prosperous and inclusive. It improves the wellbeing of our communities and protects, restores and promotes our cultures, islands and ocean ecosystems."

The PSTPF highlights the importance of shifting towards sustainable destination planning and management and tourism business practices that support prosperous and resilient economies. To this end, the PSTPF recommended that the SPTO develop a Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard with and for member nations based on the globally recognised sustainable tourism criteria established by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

The Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP)

In alignment with this outcome and the PSTPF, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) has collaborated with SPTO to jointly implement activities to reduce single-use plastics (SUPs) across the tourism industry. The target tourism sub-sectors include accommodation, food & beverage, tour operators, event management, cruise lines and airlines.

The POLP (2019-2027) is funded by the Australian Government and implemented by the SPREP in collaboration with Pacific Island Countries (PICs). The POLP is working to reduce single-use plastic marine litter in the coastal environments of PICs. It has been developed in recognition of the threat marine litter poses to the environment, public health, and economic development of the Pacific region. The POLP reflects the regional objectives of PICs. Many PICs have implemented bans or levies to reduce single-use plastics. The 2017 Pacific Islands Leaders Forum agreed to fast-track the development of policies to ban the use of single-use plastic bags and plastic and polystyrene packaging. The Leaders reaffirmed this commitment in 2018 by recognising the urgency of implementing the Pacific Regional Action Plan: Marine Litter (2018-2025). With the long-term goal of cleaner coastal environments for Pacific Island Countries, the POLP also embeds and directly contributes to the policy objectives of PICs as stated through the Pacific's Cleaner Pacific 2025. Outcome three of POLP is the adoption of plastic reduction measures by target sectors, companies and businesses. By design, the target sectors, companies, and businesses are tourism and takeaway food and beverage.

To implement the project's outcome, SPREP has collaborated with SPTO to support the research, design, development, implementation and monitoring of a dedicated programme to phase out single-use plastics targeting tourism businesses. The programme aims to contribute to the following intermediate outcomes:

- Target sectors, companies and businesses are aware of alternative products.
- Information on alternative approaches (products/methods) is accessible.

The Pacific Islands responses to a legally binding instrument for plastic pollution

The Final Declaration of the 5th France-Oceania Summit, 19 July 2021 states the following:

> *We recognise that plastic pollution is an existential threat for ecosystems in general, and marine ecosystems and species in particular, with dire consequences on the health and resilience of the oceans and resources therein and with adverse flow on impact on economies and social equilibrium. Noting plastic pollution's disproportionate impact on the Pacific Ocean and Pacific Island Countries in general, particularly considering they do not extract fossil fuels nor produce plastics and their additives, we support a decision to launch intergovernmental negotiations of a global plastic binding agreement at the second session of the fifth United Nations Environment Assembly.*

Later in the year, at the Environment Ministers' High-Level Talanoa on 10th September 2021, Pacific Islands countries showed their support for the Pacific Regional Declaration on the Prevention of Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution and its Impacts. The Declaration included support for a whole life cycle approach, prevention and reduction, national plans and plastic pollution elimination targets, "...future discussion on reduction of virgin plastic production, phasing out toxic and avoidable plastics, problematic single-use plastic products and additives and the harmonisation of design and labelling standards to support transition to a safe circular global economy and to find alternative to allow for our continued economic development….accessible information…plastic pollution prevention best practice…noting the role that private sector can play in helping drive solutions…" as well as the crucial role of Indigenous knowledge.

The mandate for the global plastics treaty (Res 5/14) was the culmination of negotiations through the previous four United Nations Environment Assemblies. The first session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) was held in Nairobi from 23-27 June 2014.

During the fourth Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting (INC-4) 23-29 April 2024 Ottawa, Canada to negotiate the zero draft text of the global plastic pollution treaty, the Pacific Islands played a crucial role, including emphasising the need to incorporate specific binding obligations, and that these obligations should cover the entire lifecycle of plastics including legacy plastics. The Pacific Islands stressed the need for a mechanism to remediate existing plastic pollution, especially in areas beyond national jurisdiction. They highlighted that voluntary measures have not and would continue to fail to solve the global plastic pollution crisis and address the plastic pollution entering the region via trade, tourism, fishing and maritime sectors, and atmospheric and tidal flows.

The Pacific Islands also advocated for the reduction of primary plastic production, increased efforts in waste management, and investments for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) due to their unique circumstances. Additionally, they emphasised the importance of upholding the 1.5-degree target and implementing a full life cycle approach to plastics, from extraction of plastic feedstocks through to removal and remediation. The implementation of the treaty was identified as a critical priority for Pacific negotiators. Understanding the implications of the treaty's implementation is essential to ensure its effectiveness in combating plastic pollution.

The Pacific Islands' response to the need for a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution demonstrates their strong commitment to environmental and economic sustainability and the rights, health, and well-being of their communities. Leaders at the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Meeting in the Cook Islands encouraged member nations to join the High Ambition Coalition to End Plastic Pollution.

The Pacific Partnerships for Prosperity (PPFP) initiative, designed to support the implementation of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, showcases the region's dedication to addressing plastic pollution at national and international levels. By endorsing the High Ambition Coalition and advocating for membership, Pacific leaders have signalled a collective commitment to combating the multifaceted impacts of plastic pollution and promoting sustainable solutions.

Objective of the Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry

The *Standards for Phasing-Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry* aims to:

- provide direction and guidance to develop and implement national standards for single-use plastics phase-outs for SPTO member countries by acting as a benchmark for the tourism industry to assess current performance and to progressively build upon in areas requiring further development over time.
- support member countries and their tourism sector in becoming more sustainable through public and private sector partnerships and action.
- create awareness and encourage visitors to travel responsibly.

The intent is that this set of Standards will be a tool for the Pacific tourism industry to inform their approach to improving sustainable practices by phasing out non-essential single-use plastics (see Appendix A: Glossary). The *Standards for phasing out single-use plastics* are relevant to all tourism businesses. Additionally, the standards provide guidance to governments, tourism organisations, civil society organisations, communities and funding partners on the standards and the ambitions of the tourism industry in relation to the single-use plastics phase-out.

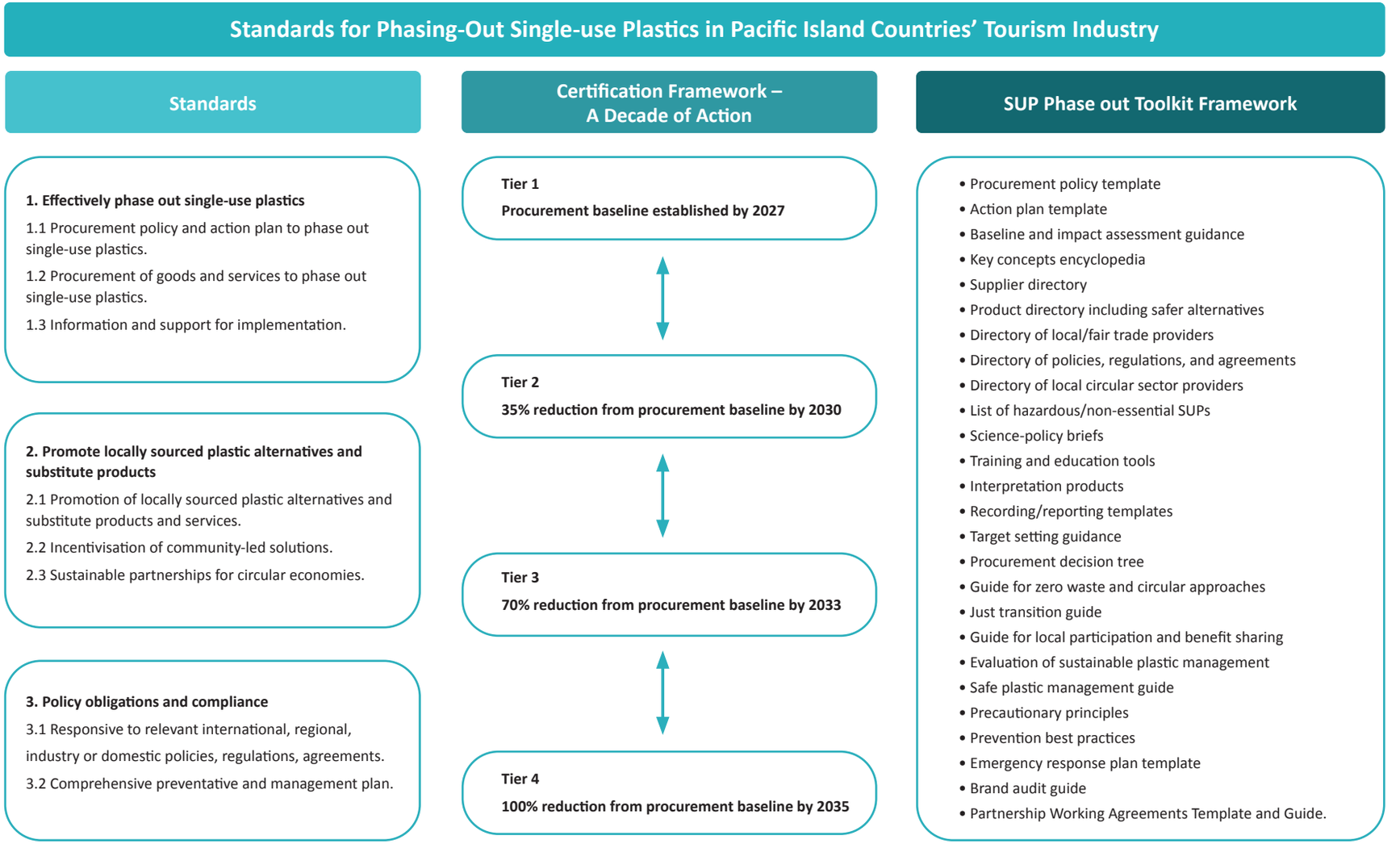
The Standards provide ambitious goals and responses to phasing out single-use plastics in the tourism industry in the Pacific Islands. Not all the standards will be relevant to all tourism businesses and organisations, and not all businesses will be able to implement the recommended responses. The criteria do not provide guidance on how to set and meet procurement targets as the *Single-Use Plastics Phase-Out Toolkit Framework* will provide all necessary guidance and will be available on the SPTO Sustainable Tourism Portal from mid-2025. In addition, ongoing capacity-building activities will be provided for the industry and national stakeholders.

Who can use the Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry?

The Standards have been designed for tourism enterprises in the Pacific Islands. These may be individual businesses, but they may also be other forms of facility, operation and undertaking. For example, they could include museums, festivals, public buildings and monuments, not only commercial businesses such as accommodation, tour operators or paid attractions.

The *Standards, Toolkit and Certification Framework* (see Figure 1) together provide a complete foundation necessary to phase out single-use plastics in the Pacific Island Countries' tourism industry.

Figure 1. The standards, certification framework, and toolkit form an integrated foundation to phase out single-use plastics in Pacific Island Countries' tourism industry.



How can the Standards for Phasing out Single-use Plastics be used?

The Standards provide an ambitious benchmark for the Pacific Island Countries' tourism industry and are designed for the tourism industry to build upon and strengthen as appropriate. The suggested implementation responses ('ways these criteria could be addressed') are a list of potential circumstances, factors, evidence, and actions to look for in a tourism enterprise in assessing alignment with the Pacific Industry Standard and the GSTC criteria. They are also closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry has been intentionally aligned with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) sustainable industry criteria (see Appendix 2). The GSTC criteria are organised around four main themes: sustainable management, socio-economic impacts, cultural impacts, and environmental impacts. The relevant GSTC criteria are indicated in the *Standards for reference*.

Alignment of all the criteria in the existing Pacific Industry Standard, including the newly proposed *Standards for Phasing-Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry*, enables the amended Industry Standard to be recognised by the GSTC in the future. GSTC-Recognised Standards are sustainable tourism standards that adhere, and are equivalent, to the GSTC Criteria.

The Certification Framework – A Decade of Action

The Certification Framework – A Decade of Action is developed in conjunction with the Standards and the Single-Use Plastics Toolkit. The Certification Framework sets the foundation for tourism businesses and organisations to tailor and shape their own national certification programmes, which can serve as a platform for progressing to international certification benchmarks. The framework also incorporates a timeline for progressive achievements intended to guide businesses and destinations in establishing a baseline, ultimately aiming to phase out 100% of the identified baseline.

SUP Toolkit Phase Out Framework

The *Toolkit* will support the implementation of the *Standards for phasing out single-use plastics* and the *Certification Framework*. The *Toolkit* will provide resources, best practice examples, guidance, templates, and other tools to enable all tourism businesses and organisations to implement the criteria and advance up the proposed four tiers of the *Certification Framework* to achieve and sustain the 100 per cent reduction of single-use plastics goal.

The Structure of the Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry

The *Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry* correspond to and build on the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Industry and Destination criteria and recommendations for action and GSTC Criteria (Hotels, Destination, Tour Operators). The *Standards* three topics correspond to the goals of the PSTPF: 1) Single-use plastics Phase Outs; 2) Locally sourced products; and 3) Policy obligations and compliance. The *Standards* set the expectations, and the implementation recommendations indicate what is needed to meet those criteria. The *Standards* are designed to guide procurement for regenerative and restorative circularity, including considerations for safe and sustainable use, handling, and management when phasing out single-use plastics. The *Standards* also include awareness raising and education for staff, visitors, supply chain actors, and stakeholders to encourage support for the Standards and its successful implementation and outcomes.

Application of the Standards

The *Standards* have been designed for a range of destination and industry settings, regardless of whether tourism as a sector is established or emerging, and on balance, accounts for the needs and capacity of large and small to medium enterprises. Not all criteria will be applicable in all situations. In particular, the application of the criteria will be influenced by the type of tourism product, the scale and scope of each business and the local regulatory, environmental, social, economic or cultural conditions, all of which affect the extent to which a business can achieve the criteria.

Who is responsible for implementing the Standards?

The PSTPF calls on all partners and stakeholders to coordinate and collaborate to advance the vision for sustainable tourism through a series of policies and actions.

Responsibility for the implementation of the PSTPF and the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard, including *The Standards*, does not necessarily reside with one organisation or sector but rather requires partnership and collaboration with stakeholders across Government, industry, civil society organisations, development partners and the community.

Successful implementation will require the commitment of ongoing financial and technical resources at national, regional, and international levels, mobilisation of which will require cross-sectoral collaboration between Pacific Island Countries, development and trading partners, and the governing bodies of regional and international policies and agreements. Successful implementation will also require policy integration across government bodies and robust compliance and enforcement mechanisms.

The *Standards for phasing out single-use plastics* have the potential to empower Pacific communities to benefit from tourism, ensure Pacific cultures remain strong, and support healthy populations, islands, and ocean ecosystems.

Review of the Standards

The SPTO will periodically review *The Standards* or as GSTC criteria are updated (whatever comes first). The SPTO welcomes feedback from member nations to provide comments on the Pacific Industry Standard, including the new *Standards for phasing out single-use plastics* at any time.

Standards for Phasing Out Single-use Plastics in Pacific Island Countries' Tourism Industry

PSTPF Priority	Topic	Criteria	Ways these criteria could be addressed	GSTC Standards
Repurpose Tourism to Deliver Greater Benefits to Pacific Communities **Protect Our Islands, Coastal and Ocean Ecosystems** **Build Resilience to Climate Change and Transition to A Low Emission, Resource Efficient Sector** **Protect and Promote Our Cultures** **Tourism Delivers Greater Benefits to Communities**	Single-use plastics Phase Outs	1. Procurement policy and action plan to phase out single-use plastics 2. Procurement of goods and services to phase out single-use plastics 3. Information and support for implementation	1. A procurement policy and action plan is in place to phase out single-use plastics, including self-determined time-bound targets that: • Are guided by essential use criteria, precautionary and prevention principles, the zero-waste hierarchy, and just transition, and take a full life cycle approach. • Aim for safe and sustainable plastics and the safe and sustainable waste management of essential plastics. • Are reviewed and updated regularly. • Promote the phase-out of single-use plastic products and packaging 2. The business carefully manages the procurement of goods and services to phase out single-use plastics by: • Maintaining a directory of suppliers offering the safest, most sustainable products, packaging and services. • Prioritising local plastic-free suppliers and suppliers with sustainability certification. • Considering the full life cycle of the product, including local conditions, contexts, and infrastructure, before purchasing any plastic product or substitute. • Sourcing non-plastic substitutes (e.g. ground nut shells, coconut husk powder, sea salt, coffee, oatmeal, or pumice) for products containing intentionally added micro- and nano-plastics (MNPs). • Sourcing products, service providers, and operators with similar zero-plastic pollution goals. • Selecting certified products (environmental, fair trade, organic) where available. • Selecting durable essential plastic products that minimise wear and tear, reducing the generation of MNPs. • Avoiding non-essential plastic products or packaging.	A.4 A.3 B1 B3 B6 D1.1 D1.2 D1.3 D2.4 D2.5 D2.6

PSTPF Priority	Topic	Criteria	Ways these criteria could be addressed	GSTC Standards
			3. The business ensures that staff, suppliers, and visitors understand the importance of the policy and plan and have the information and support to implement it, including an education plan that: • Provides information about the adverse effects of the types and forms of plastics. • Educates staff on plastic waste minimisation and safe and sustainable management practices. • Inform all personnel about the sources, risks, and mitigation of MNPs and plastic chemicals. • Provides relevant plastic pollution prevention information and guidance to visitors and suppliers	

PSTPF Priority	Topic	Criteria	Ways these criteria could be addressed	GSTC Standards
Repurpose Tourism to Deliver Greater Benefits to Pacific Communities **Protect and Promote our Cultures** **Strengthen social inclusion** **Enable Prosperous Cultural and Creative Industries**	Locally sourced products	1. Promotion of locally sourced plastic alternatives and substitute products and services 2. Incentivisation of community-led solutions 3. Sustainable partnerships for circular economies	1. The business policy and plan promote locally sourced plastic alternatives and substitute products and services by: • Maintaining and regularly reviewing a record of locally owned and fair-trade producers and providers. • Considering potential impacts on natural resources and communities. • Protecting intellectual property rights and the rights of communities and individuals • Ensuring full and meaningful public participation in the development and implementation of the business' policy and plan. • Seeking prior informed consent and guidance from local community leaders, obtaining community feedback and taking corrective actions. • Ensuring plastic pollution prevention and mitigation activities do not interfere with community and other businesses' access to natural resources, and health and sanitation services. • Supporting community plastic pollution prevention initiatives, clean-ups and other mitigation activities. 2. The business incentivises community-led plastic-free nature-based solutions by: • Creating opportunities to learn from local communities. • Promoting locally owned, made, and sourced plastic-free products, packaging, and services to visitors. • Encouraging visitors to support community plastic-free initiatives. 3. The business forges sustainable partnerships in the form of Partnership Working Agreements (PWAs) or similar, between tourism industry associations (national and regional) and government departments for circular economies.	B1 B2 B3 B4 B6 B8 B9 C2 D1.1 D1.2 D2.4

PSTPF Priority	Topic	Criteria	Ways these criteria could be addressed	GSTC Standards
Enabling Legislation and Policies **Sustainable Management**	Policy obligations and compliance	1. Responsive to relevant international, regional, national or industry policies, regulations, and agreements 2. Comprehensive preventative and management plan.	1. The business responds effectively to relevant international, regional, industry, and domestic policies and agreements and is compliant with relevant regulations by ensuring compliance with local, regional, and international plastics regulations and agreements. 2. The business has a comprehensive plan to prevent contamination from single-use plastics, including: • Integrating circular economy, precautionary and prevention principles. • Establishing emergency response plans and protocols. • Ensuring protocols are in place for the safe onsite handling and storage of plastics. • Ensuring essential plastics are safely and sustainably managed off-site.	A1 A2 A3 A6 A7.2 A7.3 C2 D2.3 D2.4 D2.5 D2.6

APPENDIX A – GLOSSARY

Circular economy is an economic system where materials are designed and used to remain in the economy for as long as possible, thereby eliminating all waste and pollutants. Instead of a linear production-use-dispose method, the circular system involves waste prevention and designing out non-circular and toxic materials, sharing, leasing, reusing, refilling, repairing, refurbishing, repurposing, composting, and remanufacturing.

Container deposit/return schemes (CDS) are designed to incentivise the return of containers (for example) for reuse/refill, repair, and recycling. Often, a deposit is built into the price of a product which is refunded to the consumer on return of the empty container. This applies to various types of containers, including stainless steel, glass, ceramic, and plastic. The refundable deposit is reimbursed at convenient collection points such as supermarkets or reverse vending machines.

Criteria are the specific and observable elements that define the expected level of quality, performance, or compliance within a particular standard. These criteria serve as the benchmarks against which processes, products, or services are evaluated to ensure they meet the established standards.

Energy efficiency is the minimisation of energy needed to produce goods while maintaining functionality and quality. The plastics sector is recognised as a high-energy consumption sector. With energy efficiency measures, such as shortening supply chains by buying locally, it is possible to reduce energy costs and lower overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across the plastics supply chain.

Essential use approach determines whether the use or function of a material is necessary for the health, safety and/or functioning of society. The essential use approach could be adapted to develop essential use/essentiality criteria to support single-use plastic phase-outs. Parties could apply for time-bound exemptions if they can provide sufficient evidence that the product is necessary for health and safety or is critical for the functioning of society and if there are no alternatives that are acceptable from the perspective of human health and the environment.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) involves producers taking responsibility for the management of products after they become waste, including collection; pre-treatment, e.g., sorting, dismantling or de-pollution; (preparation for) reuse; recovery (including recycling and energy recovery) or final disposal. EPR could also be designed to ensure producers are responsible for the full life cycle of their products, including all externalities such as financial and environmental costs to communities.

Full life cycle approach is an environmental strategy that considers the environmental impacts of plastic materials throughout their entire lifespan, from the extraction of raw materials, production, packaging, distribution, use, maintenance, recycling, reuse, disposal or incineration, recovery and remediation.

Just transition is the process of moving away from unsafe and unsustainable single-use plastics by developing creative policies that promote economic and employment opportunities high on the zero-waste hierarchy and that involve representatives of diverse sectors and backgrounds.

Micro- and nano-plastics (MNPs) Microplastics are small pieces of plastic with their longest dimension ≤ 5 mm (1). They originate from multiple sources, broadly subdivided as primary (manufactured ≤ 5mm) and secondary (generated by wear or fragmentation of larger plastic items). Nano plastics are a subcategory of microplastics with a size ranging between 1 nm and 1 µm.

Nature-based solutions (NbS) This approach emphasises harnessing the power of nature and its processes to create sustainable, cost-effective, and environmentally beneficial solutions to the plastics crisis. Several alternatives inspired by nature to respond to the plastics crisis are emerging which offer multiple benefits, including increased biodiversity, improved human well-being, and climate resilience. Implementing NbS requires cooperation and collaboration between governments, civil society organisations, and private sector actors.

Partnership Working Agreement (PWA) The business advocates for and engages in a PWA between tourism industry associations (national and regional) and government departments. The PWA may establish

a) the terms and conditions of the collaboration between stakeholder partners;

b) the objectives of the partnership, roles and responsibilities, and decision-making strategies;

c) conflict resolution or prevention strategies and approaches; and

d) strategic working arrangements.

Plastic alternatives ('Bioplastics') The term 'bioplastics' is not used consistently and has led to much confusion. Therefore, we recommend avoiding the use of this term. Instead, 'plastic alternatives' will be used as an umbrella term for bio-based plastics and biodegradable plastics (including home and industrially compostable plastics). 'Bioplastics' is a term that includes plastic materials made of biodegradable polymers (including those from fossil fuels) and plastics composed of bio-based polymers and a combination of the two. Plastic alternatives can present similar hazards to conventional plastics.

For example, plastic alternatives have been found to contain more toxic additives than conventional plastics. We distinguish between 'bio-based plastics', 'biodegradable plastics', 'biodegradation', and 'compostable' as follows:

- **Bio-based plastics** are composed or derived (entirely or partially) from renewable, biological products (including plant/forestry, animal, and marine biomass). They are not necessarily biodegradable or compostable.
- **Biodegradable plastics** can be made from renewable or fossil carbon sources and are intended to biodegrade more rapidly than conventional plastics but require specific conditions. Biodegradation of plastics is a 'system property' requiring i) material properties that allow for microbial conversion into methane or carbon dioxide, water, mineral salts, and new microbial biomass; and ii) suitable conditions in the receiving environment (microorganisms, temperature, pH, moisture, etc.) for biodegradation to take place.
- **Compostable plastics** are a subset of biodegradable plastics. While some are intended to be 'home compostable', most must be collected and transferred to appropriate industrial/commercial composting facilities and require certain conditions - e.g. sufficiently high temperatures. This distinction is seldom adequately labelled on products.

Plastic chemicals are the organic polymers (large molecules made from repeating units, often derived from plant extracts or fossil fuels) used in the production of all plastics, including plastic alternatives. While these polymers provide the main structure of plastics, additives are also commonly used to enhance properties like strength, colour, and flexibility. Impurities and residues can also be present, which can sometimes have unknown effects on humans and the environment.

Prevention principle is based on the rationale that environmental damage is best avoided rather than repaired. Applying the 'no-harm' rule of the prevention principle, means parties are obligated to ensure that single-use plastics do not cause significant harm beyond their jurisdiction or control.

Precautionary principle. A party may take measures to prevent possible harmful effects, even if definitive proof of damage has not yet been identified. Parties may, or even must, do this if there is a risk of irreversible damage.

Procurement involves every activity related to obtaining the goods and services a company needs to support its daily operations, including sourcing, negotiating terms, purchasing items, receiving and inspecting goods as necessary, and keeping records of all the steps in the process.

Recycled plastics have been referred to as the 'fig leaf' of the global plastics crisis because, globally, only 9% of plastics have ever been recycled. Collection and sorting continue to present seemingly insurmountable challenges in most locations, and plastics cannot be infinitely recycled. Even the most recyclable resin type (PET) has to be disposed of after approximately seven cycles. At each cycle, virgin resin and additives are added to maintain the integrity of the final product. Therefore, plastics are linear, not circular materials. As a result of additional chemicals included and microplastics shedding at each cycle, recycled plastics are more toxic and otherwise hazardous for human and environmental health than virgin plastics.

Single-use/short-lived plastics: Single-use plastics (SUP) (also known as short-lived plastics) are plastic items intended to be used only once or designed with short average use cycles of between 0.5 and 3 years before they are discarded or enter waste management systems.

Substitutes/Non-plastic substitutes are non-plastic materials and products used to substitute plastic items. The term should be applied to entire products as many products are made of a combination of materials and chemicals and sometimes a combination of biomass and fossil fuel sources. Some substitute products may contain harmful substances, such as new and recycled paper and board food contact materials that contain toxic substances, including some per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), organophosphate esters (OPEs), and plasticisers.

Zero-waste and zero-waste hierarchy. The *zero-waste* approach involves the conservation of all resources by means of responsible production, consumption, reuse, and recovery of all products, packaging, and materials without burning them and with no discharges to land, water, or air that threaten the environment or human capital health. The *zero-waste hierarchy* is the progression of policies and strategies to support the zero-waste system, from highest and best to lowest use of materials. Prevention, reduction, redesign, refill, reuse, repair, repurpose and remanufacture all sit at the top of the zero-waste hierarchy.

APPENDIX B – ALIGNMENT WITH GSTC STANDARDS

GSTC Industry Standard	How Standards for phasing out single-use plastics align with GSTC
A1 - Sustainability Management System	The criteria establish a comprehensive sustainability management system for procurement and waste management, aligning with the GSTC standard for implementing a long-term system addressing various sustainability issues and driving continuous improvement.
A2 - Legal Compliance	The criteria ensure compliance with relevant local, national, and international regulations related to plastic waste and sustainability, aligning with the GSTC standard for adhering to all applicable legal requirements.
A3 - Reporting and Communication	The criteria emphasise transparent communication about the sustainability policy, actions, and performance. This aligns with the GSTC standard for communicating sustainability efforts and engaging stakeholders.
A4 - Staff Engagement	The criteria ensure staff are educated on plastic waste minimisation and sustainability practices, aligning with the GSTC standard for engaging staff in the sustainability management system and providing periodic guidance and training.
A6 - Accurate Promotion	The criteria emphasise transparent and accurate communication about sustainability practices and the use of plastic alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for accurate and transparent promotional materials and marketing communications.
A7.2 - Impact and Integrity	The criteria take into account the impact on natural and cultural surroundings by promoting locally sourced and sustainable practices. This aligns with the GSTC standard for considering the capacity and integrity of natural and cultural settings.
A7.3 - Sustainable Practices and Materials	The criteria promote the use of locally appropriate and sustainable practices and materials, aligning with the GSTC standard for using sustainable practices and materials in operations.
B1 - Community Support	The criteria focus on partnering with local communities and supporting local initiatives for plastic pollution prevention. This aligns with the GSTC standard for actively supporting local infrastructure and social development projects.
B2 - Local Employment	The criteria promote equal employment opportunities for local residents in developing plastic alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for providing local residents with equal opportunities for employment and advancement.
B8 - Community Services	The criteria ensure that plastic pollution prevention efforts do not disrupt access to basic services for neighbouring communities. This aligns with the GSTC standard for ensuring that business activities do not jeopardise access to essential services.

GSTC Industry Standard	How Standards for phasing out single-use plastics align with GSTC
B9 - Local Livelihoods	The criteria ensure that plastic pollution prevention does not negatively impact local livelihoods or access to resources. This supports the GSTC standard for safeguarding local access to livelihoods and resources.
C2 - Protecting Cultural Heritage	The criteria support local communities and protect intellectual property rights related to plastic alternatives, aligning with the GSTC standard for contributing to the protection and preservation of local cultural heritage.
D1.1 - Environmentally Preferable Purchasing	The criteria focus on procuring safe, sustainable, and certified products, including plastic alternatives and local, fair-trade goods, aligning with the GSTC standard for favouring environmentally preferable purchasing practices.
D1.2 - Efficient Purchasing	The criteria advocate for minimising waste, avoiding non-essential plastics, and purchasing in bulk, which aligns with the GSTC standard on carefully managing consumable goods to reduce waste and enhance efficiency.
D1/3 Energy Conservation	The criteria include measures to minimise energy consumption in procurement processes, such as favouring products and suppliers with energy-efficient features and encouraging bulk purchasing to reduce packaging waste. These practices align with the GSTC standard for measuring and minimising energy consumption and increasing the use of renewable energy. The focus on energy-efficient procurement supports overall conservation efforts and reduces the environmental impact of operations.
D2.3 - Wastewater	The criteria include the installation of advanced filtration and treatment systems to capture and remove non-plastic microparticles from wastewater. This aligns with the GSTC standard for effective wastewater treatment with no adverse environmental effects.
D2.4 - Solid Waste	The criteria ensure waste is measured and mechanisms for reduction, reuse, or recycling are in place. This directly supports the GSTC standard for managing solid waste with minimal adverse effects on the environment and local population.
D2.5 - Harmful Substances	The criteria emphasise minimising and substituting harmful substances, including plastics, with safer alternatives. This aligns with the GSTC standard for reducing the use of harmful substances and managing their storage, use, and disposal properly.
D2.6 - Minimize Pollution	The criteria include practices for mitigating pollution from plastics, such as preventing microplastic releases. This supports the GSTC standard for minimising various forms of pollution and contaminants.

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