

Tonga Statement

Your view on major barriers to combatting marine litter and microplastics

- In Tonga, poor waste and land-based management has resulted in marine litter and microplastics debris. Traditionally, Tonga rely on the marine resources for their subsistence livelihood, thus due to human and land-based activities, poor decision making, lack of knowledge and understanding, lack of capacity building, education and awareness on proper waste management have caused pollution in our ocean and its marine resources with plastics and micro plastics. Therefore the main focus would be develop legislation and strategies, educations, raising public awareness and strong clean campaign in communities; schools, national level from government organizations, NGOs, Private Sectors, Civil Societies in order address the impacts of poor waste management and land-based activities which is a threat to the marine ecosystem regards to plastic waste.

Tonga has existing regulation on *Environment Management (Litter & Waste) Regulation 2016* which addresses people on proper waste management; however Tonga has not yet placed regulatory framework or legislation to ban plastics from developing countries to address marine litter and micro plastics. Therefore, the existing Environment Management (litter & Waste) Regulation 2016 has become a guideline for Tonga as a Government priority to address proper waste management with regards to green waste, hazardous waste and noxious waste including plastic waste and micro plastic debris.

Because ocean current has no respect to boundaries, marine litter and microplastics has become a major threat to our marine resources.

With regards to major barriers to combating microplastics in Tonga there are Legal Barriers, Financial Barriers, Technology Barriers and Information Barrier

Legal Barriers

- Lack of legislation to managing of Plastic Waste with regards to disposing, storing and recycling plastic waste
- Lack of enforcement on existing Environment Management (Litter & Waste) regulation
- Lack of a regulatory basis for upstream innovative solutions.
- Limitation of legislations and strategies to ban single use of plastics due to political issues.
- There are existing Environment & Waste Management Regulation, however there is lack of capacity, knowledge, resources with regards to implementing and enforcement

Financial Barriers

- Due to the Geographical location of Tonga in the Pacific Region, with long distances to other islands or continents there is high cost of shipping plastic waste for recycling which complicates collection
- Insufficient economies of scale for attracting investment from the private sector for viable collection and recycling
- Lack of funding and limited financial support with regards to resources and recycling process.

Technology Barriers

- Lack of technical resources for recycling plastic and aluminum waste
- Poor technical resources on waste collection, segregation and shipping of plastic waste to exporting countries
- Poor technology infrastructure on proper Waste Management

Information Barriers

- Lack of knowledge and information on the social, economic and environmental impact of marine litter, with the importance of the impact on human health, biodiversity and ecosystem
- The lack of education and public awareness as a crosscutting challenge due to a lack of resources to provide access to education and waste management.
- Lack of consumer information, awareness and public participation
- Limited formal education on marine litter and microplastics.
- Cultural barriers to behavioral change, to facilitate the adoption of reusable delivery systems and to replace single-use plastics.
- Lack of understanding and knowledge towards marine litter and microplastics
- Lack of assessments and monitoring, data collection on waste management including plastic waste
- Gaps in communications, information sharing, and education awareness between Government agencies, NGOs, Private Sector, Civil Society and Stakeholders.

Your view on potential national, regional and international response options and associated environmental, social and economic costs

Review existing policies improve waste management systems in the country where some of them are development of policies, strategies, guidelines, legislation and provision of infrastructure facilities for waste management with regards to Political issues.

Tonga is a Party to the Waigani Basel Convention which helped and assists Tonga in minimizing pollution and waste generation including hazardous and noxious (plastic) waste that ends up in the ocean. Tonga is also a party of the Stockholm Convention which aims to protect human health from Persist organic pollution. With regards to marine litter and microplastics, majority of waste generate in land, human activities, poor waste management and land-based activities the ocean and the marine resources has become a major threat and are highly vulnerable to plastic pollution.

With the financial and technical assistant of SPREP, UNEP, IUCN and JPRISM to name a few, it has help with promoting a sustainable and cleaner environment for Tonga, improving waste management with regards to Green waste, Hazardous waste, Healthcare waste and Noxious (plastic) waste, preventing waste pollution on terrestrial and marine, as well as protecting the environment and sustaining the marine ecosystem.

The Department of Environment along with other government organization and line ministries, Waste Authority as NGO, Private Sectors, Communities, Stakeholders and schools marks the global environment day with Environment and Costal Clean up, Communities inspection and to promote proper waste management and sustaining the environment and marine ecosystem. With Established Marine Protected Areas (MPA) and Special Management Areas (SMA) in Tonga, it has been considered as a government priority to address the importance of the marine resources and it's highly vulnerable to marine litter and microplastics.

With regards assessment, monitoring and reporting, plastic waste should be collected and ship to developed countries for proper disposal to prevent marine pollution from plastic waste; however marine pollution can be managed and monitored by the shipping agencies. For the Tonga State of Environment, data obtained on waste generation and disposal can increase human resources among stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental organization, Private sectors as well as cost associate with agencies, organization of negotiation under various national and international agreements.

Your view on the feasibility and effectiveness of different response options

The effective and feasible approach is to identify gaps in all different types of levels and to identify the main cause of marine litter and microplastics in order to identify direct response options with regards to friendly environmental manner for proper plastic waste disposal. However, addressing the impacts and issues of marine litter and microplastics, it should become key priorities for the government and non-government government organization, Private sectors to address and emphasize.

Existing and proposed new Marine Protected areas (MPAs) and Special Management area (SMAs) is also a feasible response in having special care for marine resources that have been greatly affected by marine litter and microplastic debris. Again, active and productive public awareness campaign and education, Environment Management Regulation enforcement and implementation are the feasible response to help educate and change the mindset and behavior for the people of Tonga, from Government and Non-government organization to Private sectors, communities as well as target stakeholders on proper waste management with regards to hazardous and noxious waste including Plastic pollution.

Because ocean current has no respect to boundaries there is an urge to local, regional, national and international level to take action now towards combating marine litter and microplastics.