

## Welcome remarks

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*Ni sa bula*

Welcome to the **Pacific Workshop on Plastic Pollution and Material Substitutes**, organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Pacific Office and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), with support from the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK-FCDO). We are delighted to have you here today, representing National Trade and Environmental Agencies, businesses, academia, and civil society organizations.

The objective of this workshop is to explore recent trends in trade of non-plastic material substitutes, which are essential for a healthy Oceans Economy. A careful examination of material substitutes and their enabling conditions can complement measures being contemplated by countries to regulate and control trade in plastics. It can at the same time support mitigation and prevention of plastic pollution, whose consequences are particularly hard for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This event will also discuss the role of green and blue finance as part of solutions for achieving United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 14 and 12.

The global value of trade flows of ocean-based goods and services was about USD 1.6 trillion in 2021. Many new and emerging sustainable sectors such as seaweed production, non-plastic substitutes, and carbon absorption services using marine biotechnology are contributing to this market. In contrast, plastic trade was estimated at USD 1.2 trillion globally. Unfortunately, only 10% of plastic waste is recycled and most plastics become waste.

This raises important questions: How can we curb production and trade of plastics? How can we increase recycling and waste management capacities? How can we use non-plastic material substitutes to shift the demand for more natural, biodegradable, compostable, and recyclable materials that are locally sourced and produced with local labor?

In this workshop, we will present the most recent data and economic analysis available. We will also discuss the legal implications of the Zero Draft Treaty to end plastic pollution on the topics mentioned. The workshop will also aim at

encouraging interaction, exchanging experiences, and listening to national perspectives related to options and opportunities linked to the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee process, as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO) Dialogue on Plastic Pollution.

We hope you will enjoy the workshop and leave with a better understanding of these important issues.

Many thanks