

Regional Validation Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific (STEP):

A Multi-Stakeholder Consultation for Strengthening Policy Ambitions on Tourism through Sustainable Consumption and Production and Circular Economy

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This Report was prepared on behalf of the EU SWITCH-Asia Pacific Policy Support Component (PSC) in coordination with the Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) by Penelope Spoelder and Rebecca Last, STEP experts, and Loraine Gatlabayan, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC Expert under the supervision of Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva, Team Leader, of SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC.

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SUMMARY



The Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) and the EU SWITCH-Asia Pacific Programme convened a regional validation workshop to advance sustainable tourism practices across Pacific Island countries on 23rd to 24th of April 2025 at Holiday Inn Suva, Fiji. The workshop brought together over 50 participants from 10 Pacific countries, representing National Tourism Authorities/Organisations (NTAs/NTOs), governments, sector leaders, development partners, NGOs, and community representatives to discuss how to align national policies with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards and embed Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) and Circular Economy (CE) principles into tourism policies and practice.

The consultation, particularly with national tourism organizations and stakeholders, served as the regional validation workshop for the findings of the [Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific \(STEP\) Project Phase 1](#), which aimed to:

- Identify the status and key gaps in each SPTO member nation's implementation of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standard (PSTS) to inform priority actions and determine where SPTO support is most needed and appropriate.
- Evaluate the current national tourism standards in the four pilot countries—Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, and Vanuatu—and assess their alignment and integration with the PSTS at the national level.
- Develop tailored pathways for the four pilot countries as scalable models for other Pacific destinations, integrating the PSTS with a focus on resource efficiency and CE principles.
- Establish a Regional Roadmap that consolidates country-specific insights and provides actionable recommendations for incorporating sustainability principles into tourism standards, policies, and business operations across the Pacific.

The workshop aimed to validate regional recommendations, assess country progress, identify shared challenges, and co-develop a regional roadmap that supports sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism.

Key points highlighted in the discussions include the following:

- Presentations underscored gaps in sustainability standards, data collection, circular economy practices, and capacity building, need for financing tools like SME grants, credit lines, and green bonds
- The importance of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework and Sustainable Tourism Standards were presented alongside key concepts such as SCP and CE.
- Country leaders and private sector speakers shared practical innovations, including sustainable accommodation models, farm-to-fork supply chains, agritourism, community-based initiatives, and renewable energy solutions. and local sourcing strategies.

- Regional leaders emphasized the importance of collaboration across government, industry, and communities. They also highlighted the need for enabling policies, stakeholder partnerships, data-driven decision-making, and entrepreneurship to drive meaningful change.
- The group discussions emphasized the importance of regional collaboration and peer-to-peer learning, knowledge sharing, and practical implementation to achieve the Pacific's sustainability ambitions.
- Participants raised cross-cutting issues including waste management, sustainable supply chains, policy coherence and the importance of regional cooperation and harmonized standards, scaling local innovations, aggregated supply, and technical training, youth engagement, and cultural preservation.

General recommendations based on the sessions' discussions

- **Finalize regional roadmap**
 - Validate priorities based on results of the workshop discussions.
- **Strengthen conservation-tourism integration**
 - Build and strengthen partnerships between NTOs and conservation NGOs.
 - Promote nature conservation, food waste reduction, sustainable procurement, and plastic phase-out.
- **Advocate for tourism in national budgets and support on financing**
 - Engage donors to align support with national priorities.
 - Support access to financing, grants, and technical support, particularly for SMEs and community-based tourism initiatives.
 - Develop financing strategies and incentives to accelerate the integration of sustainability principles in development
- **Advance sustainable visitor management**
 - Assess destination carrying capacity; rethink success metrics.
- **Promote circular economy actions in tourism policy and practice**
 - Focus on waste, procurement, construction, and agri-food.
 - Scaling innovations in renewable energy, sustainable buildings, agritourism, and waste management.
 - Support small and micro-enterprises with tailored tools, certification pathways, and access to markets.
- **Promote inclusive community models**
 - Empower community-led enterprises.
 - Foster public-private-community partnerships to co-create solutions.
- **Enhance knowledge sharing and peer learning**
 - Leverage regional platforms, upcoming summits, and hubs.
 - Proactively incorporate local knowledge and traditional practices in tourism development where benefits are identified.
 - Improve regional coordination and knowledge-sharing platforms.
- **Strengthening governance, cross-ministerial coordination, and policy enforcement.**
 - Invest in capacity building for governments, national tourism organizations and private sector actors.
 - Strengthen existing national tourism standards to include sustainability and circular economy principles and support nations without standards to develop contextually appropriate programs.
 - Enhance data systems to monitor sustainability outcomes.

Overarching recommendations from roundtable discussions

Agrifood and Agritourism

- Strengthen hotel-farmer linkages; support the development of value-added products (e.g., frozen taro, chutneys)
- Address supply chain gaps and seasonality
- Integrate farm-to-table tourism experiences

Sustainable Buildings & Traditional Knowledge

- Promote bamboo and other local materials; integrate renewable energy (solar, biochar)
- Combine indigenous knowledge with modern construction standards
- Provide training on sustainable harvesting and preservation

Destination Management & Governance

- Establish appropriate tourism legislation
- Improve interagency collaboration, data sharing, and enforcement
- Create interagency steering committees for tourism sustainability

Waste and Resource Efficiency

- Address Pacific-specific waste challenges (limited recycling, high logistics costs)
- Explore zero-waste models, producer responsibility, and identify local champions
- Introduce compostable materials and better logistics

Procurement & Private Sector Incentives

- Introduce or expand eco-friendly duty concessions and green supplier and product lists
- Create contestable funds and tax/duty incentives for SMEs
- Strengthen local procurement systems in tourism

Capacity Building & Knowledge Sharing

- Establish a regional knowledge hub for NTOs and sector stakeholders
- Organize peer-to-peer learning and tailored training
- Launch a Pacific Sustainable Tourism Expo for B2B sustainable practitioners/products/suppliers

Main Outcomes

- Validation of common challenges and opportunities across the Pacific.
- Agreement on priority themes and actions for the regional roadmap.
 - Destination Management and Governance
 - NTO and Sector Capacity Building
 - Agritourism Linkages
 - Waste Management and Resource Efficiency
 - Sustainable Purchasing and Procurement
 - Sustainable Buildings
- Commitments to align tourism sector policies and standards with regional frameworks.
- Identification of capacity gaps, financing needs, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Next Steps

SPTO and partners will support member countries in updating tourism policies and standards; facilitate regional knowledge exchange; and engage development partners to unlock funding for sustainable tourism initiatives. Immediate steps are as follows:

- Consolidate workshop outcomes into the Regional Roadmap
- Circulate draft action points to participants for feedback.
- Finalize the Regional Roadmap and country pathways for four Demonstration Countries.
- Prepare a Phase 2 concept note under the STEP Project to deepen the implementation, based on results of Phase 1 deliverables.
- Strengthen collaboration with development partners, including the European Union and SWITCH-Asia Programme.
- Information provided about the Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit in Tonga as possible platform to continue discussion and engagement.

Conclusion

The workshop discussion focused on how to integrate sustainable consumption, production, and circular economy (CE) principles into Pacific tourism. Key sectors and issues highlighted focused on agritourism, sustainable buildings, destination governance, waste management, purchasing and procurement, and capacity building.

The workshop marked a critical milestone in advancing sustainable tourism in the Pacific, setting a clear path for collective action. With shared vision, innovation, and partnership, Pacific nations are well-positioned to transition toward a circular, resilient, and inclusive tourism future.

OVERVIEW OF THE OPENING SESSION



Mr. Christopher Cocker, CEO, SPTO; Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC; Mr. Pedro Velazquez, Acting Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to the Pacific

Mr. Christopher Cocker warmly welcomed participants to the regional validation workshop on sustainable tourism, calling it a milestone for advancing a resilient and inclusive Pacific tourism sector. He highlighted the workshop's goal to validate progress under the STEP project and chart regional action aligned with sustainable tourism standards, SCP, and circular economy principles. Mr. Cocker acknowledged the EU's

crucial support since SPTO's founding and underscored tourism's economic potential to achieve the SDGs and the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy. He celebrated the diverse participation of SPTO member countries, private sector leaders, and NGOs, emphasizing that cross-sector partnerships are vital to making sustainability a reality. He reaffirmed SPTO's inclusive approach and called for collaborative action to meet ambitious 2030 goals. Mr. Cocker closed by thanking all partners and delegates, expressing confidence in the workshop's outcomes, and wishing everyone a successful gathering.

Mr. Pedro Velazquez, representing the European Union, warmly welcomed participants to the Regional Validation Workshop on Sustainable Tourism Enhancement in the Pacific, reaffirming the EU's commitment to work alongside Pacific nations toward a sustainable and resilient future. He praised the Pacific's natural beauty, cultural richness, and resilient communities, highlighting tourism's transformative role in supporting livelihoods, creating jobs (especially for women and youth), and preserving cultural heritage. Mr. Velazquez acknowledged the region's challenges – from climate change and extreme weather to economic pressures – and stressed the importance of promoting sustainable tourism standards that balance environmental protection, cultural respect, and local community benefits.

Mr. Velazquez emphasized the EU's support through the SWITCH-Asia Programme and the STEP project, which focus on sustainable consumption, production, and the circular economy. He underscored those Pacific countries can pursue both economic growth and environmental stewardship without compromise, urging leaders to use tourism as a tool for inclusive, climate-smart development. Closing his remarks, he reaffirmed the EU's commitment as a true and lasting partner and expressed heartfelt thanks, leaving participants with a strong call for collaboration and action.

Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva highlighted the Pacific's wealth of innovations in sustainable tourism, from circular construction and waste management to agritourism and sustainable procurement. She emphasized the need to scale these efforts from small pilots to system-wide impact by advancing the right strategies, partnerships, and policies. She explained the role of the SWITCH-Asia Programme, active since 2007 but working in the Pacific only recently, and outlined its two key components: grants to SMEs and policy support for governments and regional organizations like SPTO. She celebrated the Pacific's first SWITCH-Asia grant, the Blue Fish Project in Fiji, and noted two active policy projects focused on tourism and climate. Dr. Fadeeva introduced the SWITCH-Asia team and encouraged participants to share ideas and identify priority areas for collaboration under Phase II of STEP. She closed by calling on the group to maximize this opportunity, strengthen partnerships, and amplify successful practices for a more sustainable and resilient Pacific.

SESSION 1: SETTING THE SCENE



Ms. Loraine Gatlabayan, Expert, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC provided an overview of the Sustainable Tourism Enhancement Project (STEP), a partnership between SPTO and the SWITCH-Asia Pacific Policy Support Component, which works with Pacific countries to align tourism policies with the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS). She highlighted the project's focus on sustainable consumption, production, and circular economy principles, engaging stakeholders across government, industry, NGOs, and development partners to identify priority actions and develop country-specific plans and a regional roadmap. She outlined the project's progress, including scoping assessments, in-country consultations, and preparation of a draft regional roadmap to be finalized during the workshop. Ms. Gatlabayan emphasized the workshop's role in shaping SPTO's next steps, such as supporting countries in implementation,

integrating circular economy principles, and preparing a Phase 2 proposal. She closed by underscoring the importance of regional collaboration and encouraged participants to actively contribute insights to advance a sustainable, competitive, and locally driven tourism sector in the Pacific.



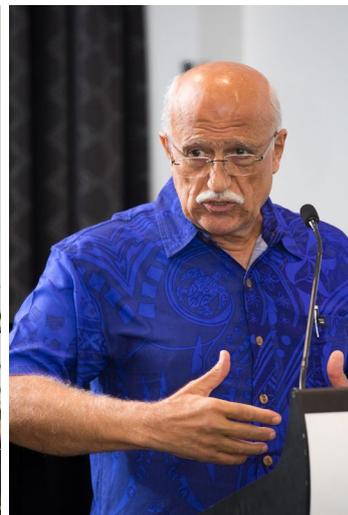
SPTO Short Video - Short Summary of Pacific Sustainable Tourism

Tourism is vital to Pacific nations, supporting economies, jobs, and communities. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pacific Tourism Organization and partners from 20 countries created a regional vision for tourism to be resilient, prosperous, and inclusive by 2030. Key achievements include launching the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, developing sustainable tourism standards, and building a regional community of practice. However, challenges remain - such as climate change, economic shocks, and the need for infrastructure, capacity building, and cultural preservation.

Ms. Christina Leala-Gale, SPTO, emphasized that SPTO cannot achieve sustainable tourism goals alone and called for strong collaboration among NGOs, the private sector, communities, and governments. She noted that SPTO and its member countries are evolving, and tourism is rebounding post-COVID-19, but the focus is now on responsible growth, not just numbers.

She outlined SPTO's new Strategic Plan 2025-2029 which centres around six strategic focus areas designed to elevate tourism as a sustainable, inclusive, and economically vital sector for the region. Ms. Leala-Gale elaborated on three strategic priorities: sustainable destination management, marketing aligned with sustainability, and evidence-based research and coordination. She also highlighted new focus areas, including tourism-aviation links, regional capacity building, and stronger partnerships. She urged participants to actively engage in discussions on key topics like waste, sustainable buildings, and procurement, all critical to achieving resilient and responsible Pacific tourism.

SESSION 2: UNDERSTANDING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE – SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STANDARDS IN THE CE/SCP CONTEXT



Mr. Brad Kirner, Chair of the Sustainable Tourism Board Sub-Committee, Cook Islands; Ms. Penny Spoelder, Expert on Tourism, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC; Mr. Arab Hoballah, Expert, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC; Dr. Rene van Berkel, Expert on Circular Economy, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC

Mr. Brad Kirner opened the session by welcoming participants and expressing enthusiasm about reflecting on the Pacific's progress in sustainable tourism. He highlighted achievements such as the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, sustainable tourism standards, and national guidelines on marine wildlife, cultural tourism, and environmental issues. He stressed that true change is being led by industry leaders and local operators on the ground. He called for recognizing and supporting these champions to inspire wider action and expressed confidence that the STEP program can help advance regional goals by offering practical tools, resources, funding, and capacity-building support.

Ms. Penny Spoelder outlined the Pacific region's journey toward sustainable tourism, emphasizing the importance of regional collaboration and frameworks. She highlighted the pivotal role of the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework (PSTPF) and Sustainable Tourism Standards (PSTS), developed post-COVID to rethink and reshape tourism. COVID-19 became a turning point, prompting Pacific nations to envision a stronger, more resilient, and community-centred tourism future. The SPTO convened 19 nations and partners to develop this framework, built on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 12 on sustainable consumption and production. The framework focuses on four major goals: prosperous economies, thriving and inclusive communities, visible and valued cultures, and healthy islands and oceans.

She emphasized the need to move from high-level frameworks to practical national and local implementation. She acknowledged significant achievements like regional guidelines (marine wildlife viewing, cultural tourism, phasing out single-use plastics, environmental audits), but also pointed out critical gaps—particularly around data collection, monitoring, and circular economy practices. She noted that while most national standards address quality and safety, they often lack sustainability measures. Nations need foundational support, capacity building, infrastructure investment, and better tools to monitor and report progress.

She mentioned the collaborations with organizations like SPREP, UNESCO, UNWTO, and highlighted ongoing efforts such as the SPTO sustainable tourism portal, community-based tourism framework, gender initiatives, and partnerships with NGOs. Finally, she framed the journey as a long but promising road, with the “green flag” symbolizing the next steps - not an endpoint, but ongoing progress toward sustainable, resilient, and inclusive tourism across the Pacific.

Mr. Arab Hoballah emphasized that Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is essential for achieving sustainable development and is already being practiced in the Pacific, though often without being named or mainstreamed. He highlighted key global challenges like overconsumption, mass tourism, and resource depletion, alongside positive local innovations. He stressed that SCP is essential for balancing economic activity with environmental protection and is key to achieving sustainable development. SCP strategies, he noted, must be tailored to each country's context but always aim for greater resource efficiency and resilience.

He highlighted why SCP matters, linking it to SDG 12 and the challenge of changing consumption patterns and economic systems. Mr. Hoballah outlined global trends, from overconsumption and inequality to positive local innovations, and stressed the need to scale up solutions. He warned against surface-level changes, greenwashing, and delayed action, emphasizing the importance of managing the transition toward sustainability. He urged Pacific countries to integrate SCP into tourism strategies, focus on system-level change, and leverage local innovations, calling for collective effort, creativity, and leadership to drive real progress.

Dr. Rene van Berkel outlined the evolution of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) from the 1992 Rio Declaration to today's focus on systems transformation, noting that the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution—is largely driven by unsustainable material use, which has tripled in 50 years and may rise another 60% by 2060. He stressed that materials consumption accounts for most biodiversity loss, over half of greenhouse gas emissions, and much of air pollution.

Highlighting the circular economy, Dr. van Berkel explained its shift from the “take-make-dispose” model to keeping resources in use, guided by principles like reduce-reuse-recycle, valuing materials, and decoupling growth from material use. Examples from Southeast Asia—Sivatel Bangkok and Pico Sands Hotel—showcase practical solutions like food waste reduction, energy efficiency, water recycling, and plastic elimination. Finally, he emphasized that many of these practices are already known and available; what is urgently needed is faster, larger-scale action to transform the tourism sector. A collection of around 80 case studies from Southeast Asia has been compiled, with about 18 business cases highlighted as potentially useful for the Pacific region, providing inspiration and practical guidance for scaling up sustainable practices.

Q&A Summary

The Q&A session explored national policies on sustainable tourism and circular economy, emphasizing the importance of sharing knowledge and scaling successful practices rather than reinventing solutions. A comment from Mr. Kennedy Kennewton from the PNG Tourism Promotion Authority raised a critical point

on the need for youth inclusion in tourism development, noting that while women’s empowerment has progressed, youth engagement remains a major challenge. Ms. Gale from SPTO acknowledged this, outlining SPTO’s efforts to engage youth through past forums and its plans to deepen collaboration with regional youth organizations, with a focus on the upcoming Pacific Sustainable Tourism Summit in Tonga. Mr. Kirner reinforced the message, noting their national focus on workforce development and embedding sustainable tourism in education to inspire youth to see tourism as a force for protecting culture and driving positive change.

SESSION 3: PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STANDARD IMPLEMENTATION – INSIGHTS FROM NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS



Ms. Reeti Onorio, Acting CEO – Tourism Authority of Kiribati moderated Session 3.

Ms. Penny Spoelder, Expert on Tourism, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC, stated that the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards were surveyed across 16 responding countries, revealing that while 75% have some form of standards (mainly on quality, safety, and licensing), most lack strong sustainability elements, especially in circular economy, sustainable purchasing, waste, water, energy use, and data collection. The regional survey showed countries need foundational support, capacity building, infrastructure investment, industry training, and better monitoring.

There were common regional challenges including limited data, weak supply chains, lack of sustainable product options, and minimal coordination on circular practices. Key gaps were noted across four framework goals: prosperous economies (e.g., weak monitoring, resilience, and sustainable purchasing), inclusive communities (e.g., low youth and women’s inclusion), valued cultures (e.g., poor

intellectual property protection), and healthy islands (e.g., limited conservation and waste management). Countries are calling for capacity building, improved data, infrastructure investment, and greater awareness among small businesses and communities. Key opportunities lie in reducing waste, promoting local products, improving policies, and sharing knowledge.



Ms. Becky Last, Expert on Tourism and Circular Economy, SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC, expanded on the survey findings, noting four demonstration countries were selected for deeper analysis as representative of SPTO members:

- **Vanuatu:** long-running standards, now refreshing to align with sustainability.
- **Samoa:** standards focused on accommodation, guided by a cross-ministry committee.
- **Kiribati:** small island state, transitioning existing standards into licensing model
- **Fiji:** early-stage of standards development, with strong private sector engagement.

Ms. Last then provided an overview of the findings and recommendations for each country, highlighting their broad alignment with the regional findings, but with national nuances. The next step is to build national pathways feeding into a regional roadmap, emphasizing practical, locally adapted solutions.

Q&A Summary

The discussion facilitated by Ms. Last raised concerns about Pacific nations’ limited capacity to implement and enforce tourism standards. Mr. Ovinu Ralulu from IFAD noted that while countries excel at drafting

policies, they often lack the manpower and resources to apply them, with behaviour change needing both incentives and enforcement. In many cases, responsibilities lie outside NTOs, with only a few officers covering vast areas. Ms. Last agreed this was a key issue and said upcoming sessions would explore co-designed interventions and practical solutions.

The Vanuatu team, represented by Ms. Geraldine Tari Natu, highlighted their challenge of overseeing 600 tourism products with just two staff. They are working to strengthen their structure, update standards, and improve implementation with clear SOPs, while emphasizing community engagement. Vanuatu currently applies one set of standards to all operators but recognizes the need to tailor them for large and small businesses. Fiji, still early in its sustainable tourism journey, is exploring which sectors to prioritize and stressed the importance of government-industry collaboration to successfully roll out standards.

SESSION 4: FROM INSIGHTS TO ACTIONS – REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PATHWAYS

During this session, **Ms. Becky Last** facilitated an interactive online poll to validate six key themes for sustainable tourism: governance, capacity building, waste efficiency, sustainable purchasing, agri-tourism linkages, and sustainable buildings. Participants were asked to help identify gaps, suggest improvements, and join breakout discussions. Cross-cutting issues like supply chains and green finance were also highlighted, aiming to shape the regional roadmap through collaborative input.

Mentimeter discussion and responses:

Participants ranked key sustainable tourism priorities: destination governance, waste/resource efficiency, sustainable procurement, agritourism linkages, and sustainable buildings. Familiarity was highest with agri-tourism and sustainable consumption, while sustainable buildings were less familiar.

Key barriers raised included: lack of guidelines, limited suppliers, high costs, inconsistent supply, poor inter-agency coordination, and gaps in local regulations, insurance, and technical expertise. Suggestions for support included: local capacity building, technical training, peer-to-peer learning, regional champions, funding/grants, clearer policies, and use of traditional knowledge. Additional gaps identified were nature conservation, ecosystem payment schemes, food waste reduction, transportation sustainability, cross-ministerial coordination, and food quality. Participants were invited to join focused table discussions after lunch to explore these themes in depth and report back.

SESSION 5: SHOWCASING INNOVATION IN THE PACIFIC

Dr. Rene van Berkel presented on innovation and circular economy practices in tourism to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental damage. He outlined five key principles for circular business innovation: tackling planetary crises, applying circularity and efficiency, ensuring responsible conduct, fostering innovation, and delivering social, economic, and cultural benefits. He emphasized that circular economy is not about reverting to the past but combining modern needs with sustainable solutions.

Dr. van Berkel shared inspiring Southeast Asian examples, including zero-waste hotels (Cambodia), circular restaurants (Vietnam/Cambodia), craft centres using textile waste (Laos), organic farms with agro-tourism (Philippines), plastic waste upcycling (Cambodia), low-cost wastewater treatment (Cambodia), and eco-friendly construction materials (Cambodia). He stressed that successful circular efforts come from businesses with a clear purpose, combining cultural, traditional, and scientific knowledge. He urged stronger focus on entrepreneurship, motivation, and capacity building—beyond just funding and technology—to help Pacific businesses adopt sustainable practices and scale impact. He then moderated the series of mini-panels:

Destination Management and Governance



Ms. Litia Mario, Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association; Ms. Charlotte Brunt, President of the Samoa Hotel and Hospitality Association; Mr. Brad Kirner (Cook Islands Tourism Corporation); Mr. Erwin Eperania (Tahiti Tourisme)

Mr. Brad Kirner emphasized the importance of having a strong tourism destination management model with clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability among stakeholders. He highlighted the ongoing destination stewardship efforts in the Cook Islands and stressed the need to shift mindsets, secure buy-in from policymakers, and engage local communities who care deeply about their culture and environment. Mr. Kirner underscored the importance of effective communication to unite stakeholders and demonstrate the benefits of working together toward sustainable tourism.

Mr. Erwin Eperania emphasized the need for strong policy support to help tourism businesses transition toward sustainable practices and adopt new innovations and technologies. He highlighted that Tahiti's Sustainable Tourism Action Plan is being guided by a steering committee composed of government, public services, private sector, and tourism professionals to ensure the effective implementation of sustainability measures on the ground.

NTO and Sector Capacity Building

Ms. Charlotte Brunt emphasized the importance of hospitality in Samoa, reflected in the tradition of open homes for guests. She highlighted efforts to redesign accommodation standards and implement certification schemes covering areas like lodging and food safety to promote sustainable tourism. To address environmental concerns and reduce waste, she shared the simple practice of "cook once and eat twice."

Ms. Litia Mario shared that a survey of tourism businesses in Fiji found 80% are engaged in sustainable practices, driven by both business value and a commitment to protecting culture, the environment, and society. She emphasized the need for governments, the tourism industry, and communities to work together on shared projects. She stressed that sustainability initiatives should support the industry's aspirations without creating unnecessary burdens.

Sustainable Buildings



Mr. Sukulu Soko, Sunnyville Bamboo – Fiji; Mr. Robert Ah Sam, Manager, Planning and Development Division at the Samoa Tourism Authority; Ms. Salaseini Daunabuna, PS Fiji Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation; Mr. Epeli Asaro, Regenerative Vanua / Vanua Levu Operators

Mr. Robert Ah Sam discussed the development of Samoa’s beach fale tourism, which operates under minimum standards established in response to operator requests for design and safety guidance. These standards cover building codes, environmental, and health compliance. He noted that successful beach fale operations have evolved to meet changing consumer expectations by upgrading facilities and offering better value. Cost savings—particularly through renewable energy solutions like off-grid solar systems and solar air conditioning—are key drivers for these businesses, alongside adapting to consumer demand for affordable, high-quality experiences.

Mr. Sukulu Soko highlighted that many Fijian villages host small eco-tourism projects, with landowners supportive of tourism in their communities. While preserving traditional home designs, He pointed to the opportunity of adopting alternative building methods like Cement Based Frame Technology (CBFT) from the Philippines, where bamboo reinforces concrete to create resilient, cost-effective, and high-quality accommodation.

Agritourism Linkages

Mr. Epeli Asaro described an eco-tourism initiative launched in 2023, aligned with a community strategic plan and national development goals, to strengthen food security and sustainable resource use. The project involves five clans piloting agro-tourism farming as part of their attractions, with plans to replicate it across other tribes. He emphasized the need to develop agri-tourism hubs that are economically viable, support food security, promote regenerative practices from ridge to reef, and reduce policy barriers to innovation and scale-up.

Ms. Salaseini Daunabuna highlighted the importance of strengthening agritourism in Fiji, where 40% of the tourism sector relies on domestic products. She pointed out the disconnect between hotels and local producers, with small-scale production struggling to meet the consistency and volume needed for tourism. She emphasized the need for a framework and an agritourism policy to coordinate stakeholders, and she called for a bottom-up and top-down approach, aligned with Fiji’s national agenda, to build political will and ensure multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Waste and Plastics waste from the perspective of Circular Economy



Mr. Clint Wendt, Director, Pacific Recyclers Foundation (Fiji); Ms. Geraldine Tari (Vanuatu Department of Tourism); Ms. Jenny Bourke (Duavata Sustainable Tourism Collective/Director and Owner, Nukubati Island - Fiji); Ms. Christina Leala-Gale (SPTO/SPREP Partnership)

Mr. Clint Wendt explained that the Pacific Recyclers Foundation (PRF) works to raise awareness about recycling and provides structured support to informal waste pickers in Fiji and the Pacific. He emphasized PRF's holistic approach to addressing plastic waste and highlighted the vital role of communities in taking responsibility for their waste and advancing recycling efforts.

Ms. Christina Leala-Gale outlined the SPTO-SPREP partnership's efforts to phase out single-use plastics in the Pacific through policy recommendations, standards, certification frameworks, and toolkits. She stressed the need for collaboration with communities and highlighted tourism's role in addressing plastic and waste pollution. She acknowledged that while global discussions on a plastic treaty are underway, the Pacific region through the support of the Secretariat of the Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) is laying the foundation for action. She emphasized the importance of public-private partnerships, national-level certification systems, and ongoing private sector consultations, with support from UNEP, UNWTO, and the Global Tourism Plastic Initiative.

Sustainable Purchasing and Procurement

Ms. Jenny Bourke shared her 35-year journey developing Nukubati Island, an eco-resort in Fiji she and her husband built using solar power, rainwater harvesting, local materials like bamboo, and homegrown food. They prioritized sustainability out of necessity, creating an authentic, high-end tourism experience without air conditioning or pools, and training local staff. She stressed that resilience, local engagement, passion, and honesty drove their success in running a sustainable business and called on governments and funders to better support entrepreneurs committed to sustainable tourism, noting that investing in sustainability protects both livelihoods and the planet.

Ms. Geraldine Tari from Vanuatu reflected on the country's tourism industry, noting that while there's little formal data on environmental, economic, or social sustainability, many operators already practice sustainable purchasing and procurement – often without formally labeling it. She highlighted examples like using renewable energy, replacing single-use plastics with biodegradable or reusable alternatives, and incorporating local products (such as coconut soap and local cuisine) in tourism services. Ms. Tari emphasized the need to celebrate and share these practices across the region and to improve data collection. Vanuatu is working to refresh its sustainable tourism standards, inspired by models like Kiribati's quality mark, to better recognize and promote sustainable efforts in the sector. She stressed that raising awareness, reinforcing existing practices, and setting visible standards will help operators feel proud of their contributions and strengthen responsible tourism across the Pacific.

SESSION 6: SCALING UP IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS KEY IMPACT AREAS

Ms. Becky Last invited participants to select one of the mini-panel topics and join a table for deeper discussion. A set of overarching guiding questions were provided to the group, with discussion on each table then facilitated by one of the SWITCH-Asia Pacific and SPTO team. At the end of the session each table was invited to report back to all participants.

1. What examples of **good practice** have you seen in your topic area?
2. What have **been the main drivers for change** in these cases?
3. **What key** learnings can be drawn to support scaling and adapting elsewhere?
4. How are these innovations being **financed**?

Roundtable presentations



Building and Construction

- Emphasis on using traditional knowledge for resilient bamboo construction, proper harvesting and preservation, and promoting solar power with government support.
- Need for training for entrepreneurship, converting construction waste to products like biochar, and raising regional awareness about bamboo species and planting.
- Importance of combining local know-how, innovation, and sustainability for resilient Pacific development.

Agrifood and Tourism

- Highlighted two key aspects of agritourism: the relationship between farmers and hotels and using agricultural activities as engaging visitor experiences.
- Challenges are inconsistent supply, seasonal availability, and pricing.
- Importance of partnerships between hotels and farmer associations to coordinate crop planning and supply, ensuring mutual commitment.

- Importance to look to international models, like frozen local produce, jams, chutneys, and farm tours, to add value and extend seasonal availability.
- Underscored educating tourists about local crops and farming practices as a cultural and revenue opportunity.
- On procurement, recommended tying tax concessions for hotel construction to green standards—such as using non-toxic, locally sourced materials, certified suppliers, and installing renewable energy systems—to promote sustainable practices in the tourism sector.

Waste and resource efficiency

- Highlighted major challenges in Pacific Island waste management, including a lack of infrastructure, limited economies of scale, remoteness, and high logistics costs for recycling and waste export. While some high-value materials like aluminium are exported, it is often too costly to handle other waste types.
- Additional barriers include insufficient policy consultation, weak enforcement of environmental laws, and low public awareness.
- Proposed solutions included better legislation and, critically, stronger enforcement; promoting zero-waste approaches and community-level initiatives; and encouraging businesses to make small but impactful changes (for example, Fiji Airways switching to wooden cutlery and paper wrapping).
- Emphasized the importance of addressing logistical barriers sustainably, as donor-funded waste transport cannot be relied upon long term.
- Suggested implementing polluter-pays schemes, producer responsibility systems (like take-back schemes for solar panel batteries), and recognizing champions and good practices to encourage progress.
- Stressed that while progress is possible, it requires cooperation across government, industry, and communities, as well as creative, locally tailored solutions.

Improving destination management and governance

- Emphasized the need for a strong legislative framework (e.g., a national tourism act) to provide authority and mandate for tourism governance.
- Noted that Fiji is currently developing such legislation, which will help formalize governance structures.
- Highlighted the importance of effective enforcement alongside legislation to ensure change is implemented.
- Stressed the need to strengthen interagency collaboration and break down silos across public and private sectors.
- Pointed out the value of data sharing between agencies to improve decision-making and policy implementation.
- Underlined the importance of managing relationships with private sector stakeholders and development partners.
- Recommended establishing interagency steering committees as a practical mechanism to drive national-level change (e.g., for legislation and tourism data management).

NGO and sector capacity building

- Establish a regional knowledge hub to share trainings, best practices, and peer-to-peer learning, expanding beyond Fiji and Vanuatu to include other Pacific Islands like Tonga.
- Enhance policy levers such as tax incentives and import duty concessions to better support the private sector.
- Create contestable funds or subsidized programs to provide financial support, especially to smaller private sector players.

- Address limited resources in National Tourism Organizations by providing them with tools like contestable funds to assist the private sector.
- Promote “no regret financing” that considers both cost-based and investment-based perspectives, ensuring smart, low-risk investments.
- Strengthen partnerships and knowledge-sharing between NGOs and the private sector to improve know-how and collaborative action.

WRAP OF DAY AND PREVIEW OF DAY 2

The wrap-up celebrated the lively and productive workshop, acknowledging the engagement and contributions from participants throughout the day. Ms. Spoelder reflected on the morning’s sessions, including the opening remarks, which set the scene and reinforced the importance of continuing momentum on SCP and circular economy goals. The national survey outcomes and consultations with Fiji, Samoa, Vanuatu, and Kiribati helped identify priority areas, which were then tested and enriched with participant feedback.

Key themes raised included the need for strong collaboration across sectors, adequate resources and personnel, and nurturing entrepreneurship. She highlighted inspiring examples from the panel sessions, where speakers shared insights on purpose, innovation, knowledge, entrepreneurship, and vision.

The group also discussed practical priorities like waste management, agrifood systems, political will, industry buy-in, and the importance of clear communication between industry, government, and communities to drive behaviour change. A key takeaway was the balance between government support and giving industry space to lead. The session closed with thanks, encouragement to return the next day, a prayer for safe travels, and reminders to access photos and social media updates.

SESSION 7: REFLECTIONS AND PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

Ms. Loraine Gatlabayan, Expert from SWITCH-Asia Pacific PSC recapped the previous day’s sessions, highlighting tourism’s role as a driver of change and the importance of embedding sustainability through sustainable consumption, production, and circular economy practices. She stressed the need for strong partnerships among national tourism bodies, governments, the private sector, and communities to achieve shared goals. Key topics included the STEP program, integrating sustainability into policies and businesses, community engagement, innovation, and policy reform. She emphasized aligning indigenous knowledge and conservation in the regional roadmap and encouraged continued collaboration, feedback, and engagement from participants. She then introduced the sessions for Day 2.



Dr. Sara Gabai highlighted the key role of communications in promoting sustainable tourism in the Pacific. She noted that SWITCH-Asia Pacific has already reached over 56,000 people by amplifying workshop insights to global audiences. Emphasizing the power of this programme as a platform followed by nearly 1 million people, she spoke of its potential to elevate Pacific voices through a coordinated regional communications roadmap. Dr. Gabai stressed the importance of authentic, locally produced content, and praised the Pacific region for its strong example of women-led communications. She called for collaboration on a regional strategy and underlined the importance of measuring impact.

SESSION 8: CONTINUATION OF SCALING UP IMPLEMENTATION ACROSS KEY IMPACT AREAS

Ms. Becky Last asked participants to return to their **thematic table groups** from the previous day and discuss the following:

1. **Define the purpose** → What is the main goal or outcome you want to achieve within your theme?
2. **Identify innovations** → What practical, scalable ideas or actions could work nationally or regionally?
3. **Specify knowledge/expertise needed** → What specific training, technical assistance, or expertise is required?
4. **Discuss entrepreneurship** → What opportunities exist to support or engage businesses in this area?

Group Presentation of Roundtable Discussion



Group on Buildings and Construction

- Promote resource-efficient, resilient buildings using local materials (bamboo, timber, rammed earth)
- Integrate traditional knowledge into education systems and building practices
- Consolidate indigenous knowledge from across the Pacific, Africa, Asia
- Provide small-scale financial incentives to support local entrepreneurship
- Strengthen building codes that reflect local realities and sustainability

Group on Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

- Develop a regional knowledge-sharing platform (Samoa, Cook Islands, Tonga examples)
- Conduct needs assessments to target capacity-building support
- Organize a Pacific Sustainable Tourism Expo focused on small operators
- Share local success stories, traditional practices (e.g., seafaring, whale-watching)
- Promote South-South cooperation and peer learning across islands

Group on Sustainable Procurement and Purchasing

- Reduce carbon footprint via eco-friendly products, phase out single-use plastics
- Create a green supplier certification system and Pacific procurement platform
- Conduct feasibility studies on local supply-demand gaps
- Provide entrepreneurship support to upscale local goods into tourism supply chains
- Revive initiatives like Pacific Food Revolution to highlight local cuisine

Group on Agritourism Linkages

- Strengthen links between agriculture, fisheries, and tourism
- Improve hotel procurement systems to source local, sustainable products
- Integrate traditional food knowledge and experiences into tourism offerings
- Promote organic, niche, and value-added products
- Address infrastructure gaps (transport, water, energy) and food safety regulations

Group on Destination Management and Governance

- Stronger emphasis and support is needed for the effective practical implementation of standards
- Offer incentives (e.g., grants, low-interest loans) to businesses meeting standards
- Improve government-industry communication and advocacy
- Consider framing sustainability standards as “guidelines” to improve industry buy-in
- Provide tools, templates, and regional best practices

Group on Waste and Resource Efficiency

- Improve energy, water, and food efficiency in tourism operations
- Promote on-site solutions (composting, biogas) and reduce waste
- Build local expertise (energy auditors, waste specialists)
- Encourage circular economy models and avoid greenwashing
- Highlight the business case for sustainability savings

Cross-Cutting Themes based on group presentations

- Strengthen regional cooperation and peer learning
- Improve data collection, monitoring, and evaluation
- Protect indigenous intellectual property and cultural assets
- Work with regional and global partners (SPC, UNESCO, PATA)
- Frame sustainability as a win-win for business and community

SESSION 9: CIRCULARITY IN TOURISM VALUE-CHAINS – BUILDING ON PROPOSED ROADMAPS AND PATHWAYS



Ms. Litia Mario, FHTA – Fiji; Ms. Charlotte Brunt, Samoa Hotels and Hospitality Association; Ms. Taulapapa Maria Leota, Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters; Ms. Alisi Tuqa, SPC (Regional)

The panel was moderated by **Dr. Rene van Berkel**, who invited the panel representatives who are leaders from regional organizations and the tourism, manufacturing, and hospitality sectors to discuss the challenges, successes, and opportunities in embedding circular economy practices into Pacific tourism value chains.

Ms. Susana Telakau shared that SPREP’s new regional waste strategy, set for completion in 2025, will focus on circular economy (CE) principles. She highlighted challenges such as growing waste, limited local production, and the need to influence importers and manufacturers toward circular design. While the region has seen progress through bans on single-use plastics and sustainable financing tools like container deposits, Ms. Telakau emphasized that more work is needed—particularly on cross-sector collaboration and behaviour change. She noted that tourism is a major waste generator and called for stronger partnerships with the sector. Recommendations included raising tourist awareness, introducing composting initiatives, installing recycling stations in hotels, and adopting CE policies to create both environmental and economic benefits. She underscored the importance of collaboration to improve waste management and make the Pacific a cleaner, more sustainable destination.

Ms. Alisi Tuqa emphasized the importance of involving the private sector in improving Pacific food systems, particularly to address inconsistent supply from farmers and fishers to the tourism sector. She highlighted the need to shift away from monoculture toward diversified, value-added crops, supported by innovation, finance, and agroecological science. Ms. Tuqa stressed that food systems should be seen not just as an agriculture issue but as a governance challenge requiring collaboration across ministries, the private sector, and civil society. She noted SPC’s work on a six-focus-area implementation plan, including the use of digital tools and business clusters to improve food systems. She also underscored the public’s growing interest in food systems and the vital advocacy role tourism can play in promoting food security and sustainability.

Ms. Taulapapa Maria Leota emphasized that manufacturing and tourism in Samoa are deeply connected but face major trade and supply chain barriers. She pointed to shipping delays, high certification costs, limited EU access, and lack of digital payment platforms as key challenges. She called for stronger trade integration in the Asia-Pacific, better logistics through Fiji and neighbouring islands, and the introduction of ISO certification not just for manufacturing but also for hotels. She highlighted the importance of traceability and certification for building buyer confidence and expressed openness to exploring group consolidation and geographic branding, such as using Samoa’s volcanic materials as a marketing advantage.

Ms. Leota emphasized that manufacturing and tourism in Samoa are deeply connected but face major trade and supply chain barriers. She pointed to shipping delays, high certification costs, limited EU access, and lack of digital payment platforms as key challenges. She called for stronger trade integration in the Asia-Pacific, better logistics through Fiji and neighbouring islands, and the introduction of ISO certification not just for manufacturing but also for hotels. She highlighted the importance of traceability and certification for building buyer confidence and expressed openness to exploring group consolidation and geographic branding, such as using Samoa’s volcanic materials as a marketing advantage.

Ms. Charlotte Brunt emphasized that Samoa aims to avoid mass tourism and focuses on supporting small businesses through open membership and practical guidelines. She highlighted the country’s recent power crisis as a turning point, leading to stronger adoption of alternative energy solutions. Ms. Brunt noted the signing of a \$3M grant with NZ MFAT to expand solar power and mentioned that some businesses are also implementing biogas systems, including for cooling in restaurants.

Summary of discussions

Together, the panellists emphasized that advancing circular economy practices in the Pacific tourism sector will require greater collaboration across government, private sector, and communities, improved logistics and supply systems, innovative financing, and scalable solutions that can lower costs and increase market access, particularly for small and community-based enterprises. Across the discussion, panellists agreed that public awareness is essential to embedding circular economy principles in the Pacific tourism sector and achieving environmental and economic benefits.

SESSION 10: VALUE ADDING & LEVERAGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM, SCP AND CE



Mr. Benoit Cambier, Head, European Investment Bank (EIB); Mr. Robert Guild, Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility; Mr. Situfu Salesa, Senior Development Programme Coordinator, New Zealand MFAT; Dr. Rene van Berkel, Senior SWITCH-Asia Expert, International Resource Panel

Dr. Zinaida Fadeeva moderated the Session focusing on “How can development partners and financial institutions collaborate with Pacific nations to unlock funding, technical assistance, and long-term value creation through sustainable and circular tourism initiatives?”

Dr. Rene van Berkel emphasized the importance of engaging businesses to advance circular economy (CE) practices in tourism. He highlighted the value of creating like-minded business groups—similar to the ASEAN CE Business Alliance or the Plastic Pact—to lead by example and pull others forward. He shared

examples of good practices in renewable energy, food waste reduction, and energy efficiency, stressing the need to scale these up through local solutions. He suggested using farmer cooperatives to aggregate supply for hotels and leveraging demand aggregation to lower product costs. For practical next steps, Dr. van Berkel recommended focusing on priority areas like plastics, food waste, waste-to-energy solutions, energy efficiency, and innovations like electric boats, to kickstart scalable CE initiatives in the Pacific.

Mr. Situfu Salesa highlighted New Zealand's strong commitment to the Pacific through bilateral development and its focus on resilience and sustainability. He emphasized the importance of financing sustainable tourism through collaborative efforts with multilateral partners and banks. He noted that community-based tourism has strong potential but needs proper financing mechanisms. He pointed to ground funding and SME support as key tools, mentioning the Samoa Business Hub as a successful example. He emphasized the need to prepare SMEs for eventual commercial bank financing and called for a mindset shift to better support sustainable tourism. He underscored New Zealand's flexible and learning-oriented approach, recognizing that many countries face similar challenges.

Mr. Robert Guild explained that the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF) helps coordinate development assistance for national infrastructure plans. He emphasized the importance of having medium- to long-term infrastructure plans to reduce business uncertainty and attract tourism investments. PRIF is working on building codes and harmonized standards to support demand and supply aggregation, but he noted that raising standards can also increase costs. He highlighted the need to balance modern standards with traditional building practices, especially for small-scale tourism. He also stressed the importance of developing human capital, as the tourism sector struggles to find and retain skilled workers. While PRIF has not focused much on circular economy or waste yet, it is exploring the use of local materials and supporting technical groups like Engineers Fiji to help apply local construction techniques.

Mr. Benoit Cambier introduced the European Investment Bank (EIB) as the EU's financing institution, highlighting its distinct role from other global financiers like the ADB and World Bank. While EIB's past work in the Pacific has largely focused on water, energy, digital connectivity, and infrastructure through the EU's Global Gateway initiative. He emphasized the growing opportunity to support sectors like energy efficiency and the CE, including in tourism. He underscored the importance of strong resource management—particularly water supply—and recommended strategies such as aggregating supply and demand to overcome local constraints and attract investment. He also acknowledged the challenges faced by SMEs in accessing climate finance and impact investment, pointing to EIB's efforts to build the capacity of local banks and managers to identify and support viable projects. Overall, he stressed the need for innovative financing mechanisms and strong partnerships to unlock investment, noting that shared learning and successful examples will be key to driving sustainable progress in the Pacific.

Throughout the session, the panellists repeatedly stressed the importance of aggregating supply and demand, improving financial literacy, tailoring business models to local conditions, and strengthening collaboration among governments, banks, businesses, and international partners. The discussion concluded with a call to integrate these insights into the forthcoming Pacific regional sustainable tourism roadmap and to build partnerships that link technical innovation with financial and policy support.

SESSION 11: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL ROADMAP AND COUNTRY PATHWAYS

Ms. Penny Spoelder provided a presentation on the insights from the full workshop. Participants highlighted that while global and national commitments to environmental sustainability are increasing, these priorities are not sufficiently reflected at the sectoral or country level, particularly in tourism. There is currently limited engagement between NTOs and conservation NGOs, even though NGOs are deeply involved in community-based environmental work. This disconnect represents a missed opportunity to align tourism with conservation goals, especially as many countries have made international commitments related to oceans, biodiversity, and climate action.

A key theme was the need for the tourism sector to have a stronger, more strategic voice in larger conversations around blue economies, ocean protection, and sustainability. While high-level political commitments exist, they often do not translate into tangible support or resources for tourism agencies on the ground. The call was made for increased advocacy and the mobilization of budgetary support, with the suggestion that development partners like New Zealand and Australia could help align their assistance with national frameworks and tourism priorities. Speakers expressed frustration that despite repeated identification of needs and priorities, little action often follows, leaving tourism underfunded and undervalued in national development plans.

In terms of sustainability, the discussion covered important issues like managing the types of tourists visiting the Pacific, particularly the impacts of cruise tourism, and the need for governance measures to address sustainable consumption. Participants stressed the importance of understanding destination carrying capacities, especially in small island contexts where perpetual tourism growth is neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, there was a call to redefine success metrics for tourism beyond simple visitor numbers, focusing instead on holistic value – including cultural, environmental, and social well-being alongside economic benefits. This would help guide destination marketing strategies towards more sustainable, high-value tourism models. Participants acknowledged that there are mechanisms in place with examples of community tourism models at country level. They advocated for to support community-centred economic models that are already working well to distribute benefits equitably.



The session concluded with an interactive prioritization exercise where participants identified their top three priorities across thematic areas such as agritourism, sustainable buildings, destination management, waste, sustainable procurement, and new/emerging priorities. Participants were also asked to identify their country and sector affiliation (government, private sector, NGO, donor, or community). This exercise aimed to capture shifts in priorities after two days of discussion and to help guide the development of a future roadmap.

The results of the exercise in terms of prioritization are as follows:

1. **First priority:** Destination Management and Governance
2. **Second priority:** Agritourism Linkages and
3. **Third priority:** Waste Management and Resource Efficiency

CLOSING SESSION

The session ended with closing reflections and commitments from partners, represented by Zinaida Fadeeva of SWITCH-Asia PSC, Ms. Andreja Vidal from the European Union Delegation to the Pacific, Mr. Brad Kirner from the Sustainable Tourism Board Sub-Committee, Cook Islands and Ms. Christina Leala-Gale from SPTO.



Ms. Andreja Vidal highlighted EU's own journey towards circular economy with the launch of its first Circular Economy Action Plan in 2015 and the progress made in areas like waste and plastics. She stressed that EU's full circularity remains a long-term goal targeted for 2050. She mentioned the EU Delegation's support in the Pacific towards circular economy transition through the PacWaste Plus program addressing waste as an entry point and affirmed the readiness of the Pacific for broader circular economy efforts, which led to the expansion of the SWITCH-Asia program into the region, including the tourism sector. She stressed that transformation takes time but can be achieved with a clear strategy, coordinated action, and strong partnerships. She mentioned that the insights from the workshop would directly inform future EU planning and support for Pacific initiatives.

The speakers acknowledged that the Pacific has no shortage of ideas and creativity, scaling and institutionalizing these innovations requires stronger systems, targeted technical support, and financial resources. It was emphasized that building a circular economy and sustainable tourism sector will take time and phased action, and that collaboration among governments, development partners, private sector actors, and communities is essential. Immediate next steps include validating the workshop roadmap, seeking country endorsement, identifying priorities for donor and technical support, and building synergies with existing programs.

The event closed on a positive and culturally grounded note, with a farewell song in Fijian, expressions of gratitude to all partners and participants, an invitation to future events (notably the Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit in Tonga), and a prayer to bless participants' journeys home and the work ahead.





KEY HIGHLIGHTS

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
 Tourism holds great potential as an economic driver and a key enabler of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Strengthening our partnerships is essential to advancing the Blue Pacific 2050 Strategy and SPTO's upcoming Strategic Plan (2025–2029), ensuring we respond effectively to the evolving priorities of our Member Countries. **By coming together, sharing perspectives, and building bridges, we can forge a shared and sustainable future for tourism in the Pacific.**”



CHRISTOPHER COCKER
 CEO Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
The European Union has placed sustainability and resilience at the heart of its engagement in the Pacific. We are not here as distant observers, but as committed partners—listening, learning, and working alongside you to shape a tourism sector that is future-ready, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.”



PEDRO VELAZQUEZ
 Acting Head of Cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
 Across the region, sustainable practices—from green buildings to agritourism, and from destination management to waste reduction—are already taking root. **What we aim to explore today is how these efforts can be scaled up and integrated into broader policy and planning frameworks.**”



ZINAIDA FADEVA
 Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
 Effective tourism destination management relies on clear roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. The Cook Islands is already advancing in this area through its ongoing destination stewardship efforts. **To drive meaningful change, we must shift default mindsets and secure high-level policy support, while engaging those who care deeply about their home, people, and culture.** Strong communication is essential to build understanding and collaboration toward a shared vision of sustainable tourism.”



BRAD KIRNER
 Cook Islands Tourism Corporation

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
A recent survey showed that 80% of tourism businesses are adopting sustainable practices because they make strong business sense. Sustainable tourism is not only practical, it supports our culture, environment, and communities. Governments must work closely with the tourism industry and local communities, as tourism lives within these communities. Future actions should focus on positive impact without adding unnecessary burdens, but rather advancing the shared aspirations we all hold.”



LITIA MARIO
 Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA)

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
 In Samoa, guests hold a special place in our culture, reflected in the openness of our traditional homes. We have also taken steps to redesign our accommodation standards to better align with sustainable tourism. A national certification scheme plays a key role, grading areas such as lodging and food safety to ensure quality and sustainability. **To protect our environment and reduce waste, we embrace simple practices like “cook once, eat twice.”**”



CHARLOTTE BRUNT
 Samoa Hospitality and Hotel Association

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
Policy support is essential to help tourism businesses transition toward more sustainable practices, fostering innovation and the adoption of new technologies. To drive this forward, a dedicated steering committee comprising government, public services, the private sector, and tourism professionals has been established to implement the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan and translate its goals into tangible, on-the-ground impact.”



ERWIN EPERANIA
 Tahiti Tourism

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
Sustainability in the Pacific relies on using local construction materials, and bamboo, abundant across the region, is ideal, either alone or combined with others. Embracing bamboo requires a shift in building design and greater awareness of its many benefits and potential applications.”



SUKULU SOKO
 Sunnyville Bamboo, Fiji

SA 30 PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION | PACIFIC SUSTAINABLE TOURISM COMMITMENT | switchasia Pacific | Funded by the European Union

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP

“
 In 2023, a Fiji eco-tourism venture launched a community-led plan linking national goals with local needs. Working with five clans, the project integrates agro-tourism and farming to boost food security and create sustainable, regenerative models. It promotes farm-to-fork solutions while aiming to scale up agri-tourism hubs. **Key results include reducing policy barriers, supporting innovation, and ensuring community investment and understanding.**”



EPELI ASARO
 Muaniwatu Trails

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Beach fales are a unique feature of Samoan tourism, developed with clear standards for design, safety, and environmental compliance. In response to operator demand, these guidelines help improve quality and ensure value for money. **Many fales have been upgraded over time to meet changing consumer needs, with cost-saving measures like solar energy systems driving sustainable operations.**



ROB AH SAM
Samoa Tourism Authority

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Agritourism offers major potential in Fiji, where tourism drives 40% of the economy. Yet, a disconnect remains between local producers and the hospitality sector, limiting the use of local food. Most producers lack the scale to meet consistent demand, and there's no unified agri-tourism policy to guide collaboration. **A coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach linking grassroots efforts with national priorities is key to scaling farm-to-fork initiatives and building political momentum.**



SALASEINI DAUNABUNA
Permanent Secretary for
Fiji Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



In Samoa, guests hold a special place in our culture, reflected in the openness of our traditional homes. We have also taken steps to redesign our accommodation standards to better align with sustainable tourism. A national certification scheme plays a key role, grading areas such as lodging and food safety to ensure quality and sustainability. **To protect our environment and reduce waste, we embrace simple practices like "cook once, eat twice."**



CHARLOTTE BRUNT
Samoa Hospitality and Hotel Association

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



We lack sufficient data on environmental and social indicators, despite many operators already practicing sustainable procurement. It's important to highlight and share these efforts across the industry. With policies like plastic bans and a shift to renewable energy, we see real progress. **We're now working on updating our Minimum Standards to integrate SCP and circular economy principles, helping the industry move forward.**



GERALDINE TARI
Vanuatu Department of Tourism

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



SPTO and SPREP are working together to phase out single-use plastics through standards, certification, and toolkits. **Tourism can be part of the solution, with businesses developing plans to reduce plastic use.** Supported by UNEP, UNWTO, and the Global Plastic Partnership, this initiative promotes public-private collaboration and provides tools to guide the transition across the Pacific.



CHRISTINA LEALA GALE
Sustainable Tourism Manager,
Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



The Pacific Recyclers Foundation raises awareness on recycling and provides structured support to individuals and groups involved in informal waste picking across Fiji and the Pacific. **Our initiatives go beyond recycling programs, they empower communities to take responsibility for their waste.** We are tackling plastic pollution through a holistic approach that recognizes the critical role communities play in effective recycling efforts.



CLINT WENDT
Pacific Recyclers Foundation, Fiji

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



For 35 years, we've lived sustainably on a remote island using solar power, rainwater harvesting, and local materials. **Tourism became our lifeline, rooted in indigenous knowledge and a commitment to preserving nature**—no pool, no aircon, just bamboo and authenticity. We recycle, manage wastewater, grow food, and support local markets. Though setup costs were high, especially for solar, it's been worth it. I hope others taking this path receive the support they need. Sustainable living is possible and meaningful.



JENNY BOURKE
Duavata Sustainable Tourism
Collective / Nukubati Island, Fiji

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



The Circular Economy is a call to action to significantly scale up efforts to use materials, energy, and water more efficiently, for longer, and in repeated cycles. This is entirely achievable for hotels and other tourism operators through the adoption of best practices and continuous innovation.



RENE VAN BERKEL
Senior Circular Economy Expert for
EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



For the Pacific's resilience, and to protect its rich cultures and fragile ecosystems, Sustainable Consumption and Production must be seen as an evolving and necessary process. It offers significant opportunities for building healthy, thriving communities through more responsible behaviours and sustainable lifestyles.



ARAB HOBALLAH
Senior SCP Expert for EU SWITCH-Asia
Policy Support Component

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



The STEP Project offers a powerful lever to transform how tourism is planned, developed, and managed across the Pacific—through a more holistic and integrated approach. I'm excited about the opportunities ahead to collaborate across sectors and drive meaningful change, one step at a time.



CHRISTINA LEALA GALE

Sustainable Tourism Manager,
Pacific Tourism Organisation (PTO)

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Pacific Island communities have long lived the values of a circular economy—embracing local products, sustainable building materials, and intergenerational resource-sharing. As the tourism sector advances its sustainability journey, this workshop is a valuable opportunity to honour these traditions by strengthening local supply chains, reducing waste, and scaling circular economy practices that support resilient communities and thriving destinations across the Pacific.



PENNY SPOELDER

Expert for EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support
Component, Tourism Development

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



In Samoa, guests hold a special place in our culture, reflected in the openness of our traditional homes. We have also taken steps to redesign our accommodation standards to better align with sustainable tourism. A national certification scheme plays a key role, grading areas such as lodging and food safety to ensure quality and sustainability. **To protect our environment and reduce waste, we embrace simple practices like "cook once, eat twice."**



CHARLOTTE BRUNT

Samoa Hospitality and Hotel Association

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



We are here to amplify the voice of the Pacific—its challenges, strengths, and successes. Moving forward, we must strategically shape our messages and targets to share the region's authentic story, where women are at the heart of leadership and resilience.



SARA GABAI

Communication and Partnerships,
SWITCH-Asia Programme

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Waste is not just waste—it can be a resource. To move forward, we must place the circular economy at the heart of our strategy and strengthen collaboration, especially with the tourism sector, to create both environmental and economic benefits for the Pacific.



SUSANA TELAKAU

SPREP – Regional

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Food systems are not just an agricultural issue—they are about governance, innovation, and collaboration. To make real progress, we need multi-sectoral engagement, with tourism playing a key role in advocating for sustainable and resilient food practices across the Pacific.



ALISI TUQA

SPC – Regional

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Manufacturing and tourism are deeply interwoven in the Pacific, but trade and logistics barriers—from high certification costs to unreliable shipping—undermine our confidence and competitiveness. To move forward, we need stronger regional integration, better traceability, and shared solutions that build trust in Pacific-made products.



TAULAPAPA MARIA LEOTA

Samoa Association of Manufacturers
and Exporters

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



We need smarter connections between buyers and local producers, especially through digital tools and collective models. There is real potential in engaging smaller operators and larger industry players to drive local sourcing and build stronger, more resilient supply chains.



LITIA MARIO

Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association (FHTA)

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



In Samoa, we're focused on quality over mass tourism. Our association provides open support and practical guidelines for new businesses. **The recent power crisis highlighted the urgent need for alternative energy. Solutions like biogas are already being adopted**, showing the sector's commitment to sustainability.



CHARLOTTE BRUNT

Samoa Hospitality and Hotel Association

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Through the EU's Global Gateway initiative, we aim to promote sustainable investment in the Pacific, focusing on critical areas like water, energy, and digital connectivity. **While tourism hasn't been a primary target, there's strong potential to link it with climate resilience and circular economy goals**—notably by working with local banks to unlock financing for impactful, community-driven projects.



BENOIT CAMBIER

Head, European Investment Bank

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



To scale circular economy practices in the Pacific, we must engage like-minded businesses that can lead by example and pull others forward. **By aggregating supply for tourism sector and anchoring solutions in local contexts**, the key is to start with focused, practical actions around priority areas like plastic reduction, food waste, and energy efficiency and renewables.



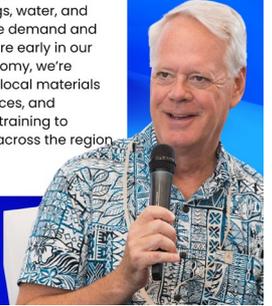
RENE VAN BERKEL

Senior Circular Economy Expert for EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



To attract sustainable tourism investment, we need long-term infrastructure planning that reduces uncertainty and builds market confidence. Coordinated standards, especially for buildings, water, and energy, can help drive demand and lower costs. While we're early in our work on circular economy, we're promoting the use of local materials and traditional practices, and supporting technical training to strengthen capacity across the region.



ROBERT GUILD

Team Leader, Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility

STEP REGIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP



Sustainable tourism in the Pacific must start from the ground up, with strong community-based development. New Zealand recognizes its role in supporting the region, and through collaborative efforts with multilateral partners, we aim to finance and scale up these initiatives. **The key is to create a mindset shift towards sustainable tourism and empower small businesses through programs like the Samoa Business Hub, eventually enabling access to commercial bank support.**



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