

Press release: Minister for Asia and the Pacific unveils plans to curb Pacific Ocean plastic pollution

Britain has pledged to champion Climate Risk and Resilience at next year's UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit, and has confirmed that its three missions in Samoa, Tonga, and Vanuatu will all be free of avoidable single-use plastics.

The uninhabited Henderson Island was recently established to have the worst levels of plastic rubbish on its shores of anywhere in the world, and marine plastic pollution elsewhere in the region is a growing problem. The UK's three additional diplomatic missions in the region will be barred from using avoidable single-use plastics, and will help promote further joint work on climate change issues in the region.

Making the announcement at the Pacific Islands Forum, Minister for Asia and the Pacific Mark Field said:

Climate change poses a clear and present danger to the people of the Pacific islands like nowhere else in the world. The UK is already working with Vanuatu through the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance to tackle the scourge of plastic pollution, and it is important our own representatives lead by example by cracking down on single-use plastics.

But addressing climate change needs massive transformational change and I am proud of Britain's contribution through the Green Climate Fund. We will be building on this by working much more closely with all the Pacific islands through our missions in the region in the coming years.

The UK is among the largest contributors of international climate finance and in the four years to 2020 will be giving developing countries over £5.5 billion to help them mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

This will build on commitments made at the Commonwealth Head of Governments Meeting in London earlier this year which saw the creation of the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance.

The government has today also announced that the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu are the first of six countries to receive support through Defra's £6 million Commonwealth Litter Programme, partnering with countries in their efforts to reduce single-use plastics and other litter entering the oceans.

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) will eliminate avoidable single-use plastics from its UK operations by the end of the year, and from its global

operations by 2020. It is the first UK government department to announce such a ban and the commitment makes the FCO global a leader in the fight against plastic pollution.

Notes to editors

1. Britain has in the past had missions in Tonga and Vanuatu and is now re-establishing High Commissions in each, along with a new High Commission in Samoa. They will collectively deliver significant bilateral and regional impact and help increase UK influence in multilateral fora.
2. Initial estimates suggest that the FCO globally is consuming at least 3.45 million items of avoidable single-use plastics.