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on behalf of the Pacific Islands region

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At least a quarter of the world's land area is owned, managed, used or occupied by Indigenous peoples. Coastal and island-based Indigenous peoples are custodians of vast ocean areas. Oceans are also Indigenous territories over which Indigenous oceanic peoples have held customary territorial rights since time immemorial.

The impacts of plastic pollution and associated toxicants and climate change impacts as a result of plastics production, consumption, and disposal directly impacts Indigenous peoples' livelihoods, human and ecosystem health, cultural identity, and wellbeing.

We note that the UNEP Policy Guidance "UNEP and Indigenous Peoples: A Partnership in Caring for the Environment" impels UNEP to regularly engage and consult with Indigenous Peoples when developing and implementing its Programme of Work.

The objective of this Policy Guidance to UNEP is to "better understand and build on the Indigenous Peoples' rights, knowledge, practices and systems that provide the framework for the direct relationships most Indigenous Peoples have with their environment. Furthermore, this Policy Guidance aims to ensure that United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) appropriately considers Indigenous Peoples in its activities."

UNEP operates on the principles of involving Indigenous Peoples in impact assessment of development and environmental projects that involve and/or impact upon them. We note with concern, however, that there has been a lack of Indigenous input into the AHEG discussions reporting. At UNEA4, the Indigenous People's Major Group strongly called for the inclusion of traditional knowledge and indicators in global assessments. Indigenous communities have long scientific histories and can provide complex socio-ecological in-situ data for the monitoring of plastic pollution and its impacts.

Guidance documents such as the Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous peoples must be centered in all work moving forward. Furthermore, these documents should not be viewed as a proxy for Indigenous minds and voices. Therefore, we call for Indigenous perspectives and impacts to be centered in future AHEG work.