



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

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Statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States
2020 UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14:
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable
development

Preparatory Meeting

4-5 February 2020
UNHQ, CR4

Co-Facilitators,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

We also associate ourselves with the statements of the distinguished representative of Guyana on behalf of G77+China, Belize on behalf the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and Tuvalu on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF).

We first like to congratulate the co-facilitators, the distinguished Ambassadors of Palau and Denmark on their appointment and express our group's full support.

Co- Facilitators,

As has been highlighted by speakers before me, the theme for the 2020 UN Ocean Conference, “scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: Stocktaking, partnerships and solutions” is indeed a timely theme as we also launch the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. When the Secretary-General highlighted his priorities, he rightly pointed to the importance of the Ocean Conference in Lisbon later this year.

We are entering both an *International Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development* and a *Decade for Action* to deliver on the 2030 Agenda. The Conference has a pivotal role to play for both.

Plastic pollution, overfishing, overheating and acidification from climate change and other adverse effects of rampant anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions are driving a crisis in the Ocean. Marine science and innovation go hand in hand and are needed if we are to achieve SDG14 and its targets. Accurate scientific data will help Governments and all stakeholders make better policy decisions which in turn will help us meet our development goals in a more efficient but also sustainable manner.

Furthermore, with the accelerated decline of the state of our marine environment as reflected in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate issued last year, innovation is critical if we are to develop new solutions to new challenges.

Co- Facilitators,

With regards to the political declaration, the Pacific SIDS, have certain key priorities we would like to see reflected in the final declaration, some of which have been highlighted by speakers before me.

Firstly, when considering science and innovation, it is important that we also reflect the capacity challenges that many developing States including PSIDS face.

We must acknowledge that not all Member States are on the same level when it comes to capacity and technology and we would be remiss to not adequately reflect this in the political declaration in light of the stark reality that developing States deal with daily.

In this same vein, we must acknowledge that in these advanced times we live in, there has been an explosion of new Ocean-related data and technology, and a vast store of this scientific data including technology are in the hands of governments, researchers and industry but in most cases the data obtained are unstructured, inaccessible and for many developing states, unusable.

These data and access to technology should by default be made open and available through some sort of coordinated effort between governments, researchers and industry so that all states can

benefit. Such an effort should include robust capacity building to ensure that potential recipients of such data and technology are able to utilize them fully to better understand and manage the Ocean.

Co-facilitators,

Secondly, with the adverse impacts of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions on the Ocean, including the rise in Ocean temperatures, Ocean and coastal acidification, deoxygenation, and sea level rise to name a few; climate change and related natural phenomena are perhaps the most monumental threats to the Ocean and the appropriate science and innovation need to be developed that help to study their effects further but also to help boost existing mitigation efforts.

The ‘Call for Action’ adopted at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference made reference to this and the Pacific SIDS want to see the same reflected in the political declaration this year as we along with other SIDS are at the frontlines of climate-change fighting for our lives and at times our very existence.

Reference must also be made to highlight current efforts taking place within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to synergize climate change and the Ocean. The world met in Madrid last year at COP25 in an attempt to advance this work further and took a decision to establish a formal dialogue this year on the matter, however more needs to be done. The political declaration must acknowledge and encourage these efforts further; you cannot have a healthy Ocean without first addressing climate change and related natural phenomena, as they are interlinked.

Co-Facilitators,

There is no doubt on the key role Ocean science and technology play in informing decision makers. This role emphasizes the need for the best available science to inform the adoption of effective conservation and management measures.

In connection to this, however, we wish to underscore the role of traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities; we believe that traditional knowledge systems are a complement to science. We are encouraged that the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/70) issued last year acknowledges the need to strengthen the integration

of the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples and local communities as a complement to Ocean science. We also note that several recent major reports and processes reflect the relevance of such traditional knowledge for the Ocean, include the IPBES Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, the IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate, and regional workshops in preparation for the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, to name a few.

Our civilizations have been built on our symbiotic relationship with the Ocean. The wealth of knowledge gathered by our ancestors over generations and transmitted to all of us have guided our inter-island travels, our resource-management decisions, and our vision of the world. This is an invaluable evolving knowledge system that needs to inform our Ocean management and conservation decisions and we urge that traditional knowledge be further integrated as a complement to scientific work and that this be reflected in the political declaration.

Finally, to keep the momentum going from the first UN Ocean Conference, the Pacific SIDS would like to see some acknowledgement of the efforts made by Member States either regionally or nationally to meet the specific targets set out in SDG14 through the 2017 voluntary commitments we made, as this will show the progress made with some targets maturing this year but can also help us to track what more needs to be achieved before 2030.

I thank you.

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