

Thank you Madam President,

Aotearoa New Zealand associates itself with the statement delivered by Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous people consider they have a kinship relationship with Tangaroa, the god of the oceans, and all of Tangaroa's children within the ocean: the fish, marine mammals, seabirds, the currents and swells, and other invisible life forces within the ocean. This relationship brings a responsibility of stewardship - or "kaitiaki" in the Māori language - that all people in New Zealand share.

As a member of the High Ambition Coalition, New Zealand seeks an ambitious global treaty under UNCLOS that protects and restores ocean biodiversity for the generations to come. We cannot continue to live with the status quo. The current system for governing activities in the ocean is not delivering on conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ. Therefore, we need to achieve a treaty that will improve how we collectively manage activities, that elevates the consideration of BBNJ in all sectoral and regional regimes, and breaks the trend of the decline in BBNJ.

We have worked hard and come along way during IG4. We are impressed with the constructive spirit, the level of engagement and the willingness to work together on drafting proposals. We thank the High Seas Alliance and other civil society members participating in our work, either as official observers or as non-government members of national delegations. We hope that the modalities which have hindered their access to the negotiations will not be required at IGC5. We also thank you Madam President and our excellent facilitators for your guidance, and the Secretariat and conference staff for their support.

We cannot not let up our pace. We have faith that we can work together over the coming months to find solutions on the last remaining issues and adopt a strong and effective treaty. We have to be ready to find creative and constructive solutions to areas of difference, recognising that the treaty we adopt will not be an exact match for any of our starting positions. However, it will be stronger for being the product of our collective endeavours.

Our delegation stands ready to engage on proposals over the coming weeks. In particular, we also have a strong interest in working with others to on textual proposals that:

- strengthen the biodiversity conservation outcomes
- strengthen governance mechanisms;
- clarify the roles and collaboration between the BBNJ COP and other competent bodies;
- acknowledge the intrinsic relationship of SIDS with the oceans and the implications that flow from that; and

- provide for the recognition and appropriate treatment of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities in ABNJ

As we head to IGC5 we are in the final stretch of our long ocean journey. Our destination is in sight. We can and must have a BBNJ Agreement in 2022. Concluding a major multilateral treaty in these times will be an historic achievement, which will send a positive message for cooperation in global commons and multilateralism overall.