

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Ngedikes Olai Uludong
Permanent Representative of Palau
on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States**

**Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the
United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use
of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction
First substantive session**

4 September 2018, New York

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good afternoon dear excellencies and colleagues,

Madame President,

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the twelve Pacific Island Developing States (PSIDS), namely Fiji, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

We align ourselves with the remarks made by the distinguished representative of Egypt on behalf of the G77 and China, as well as those delivered by the distinguished representative of Maldives on behalf of AOSIS.

Madame President,

As Pacific Islanders, our very livelihood, survival, and identity is centered around The Ocean. Throughout our generations, we have developed a reciprocal relationship with the ocean, learning that we need to care for it if we want to continue benefiting from its generosity. We have the belief that you take what you need and nothing more. This is why Pacific delegations have participated actively and with great interest in the work of the Law of the Sea. The BBNJ process would note that despite our different views, our discussions have been carried out in good spirit. We are certainly looking forward to this process being conducted in the same open, understanding and respectful atmosphere.

Pacific SIDS do not want the process to stall. While we support the spirit of consensus, we want to ensure that respect prevails. That entails engaging constructively in debates where we listen to each other's concerns and communicate our own. We have come here ready to work. This is a very costly commitment for all of us, and we intend to make it worth it.

Madame President,

The provision of your Aid to discussions paper well ahead of the start of our session was certainly very helpful in our dutiful preparations. We thank you for this. We understand that this was a

difficult exercise in particular since it aims to put “the Conference on a path to the preparation of a zero draft of the instrument” as agreed to at the April 2018 procedural meeting.

We believe your Aid has done this and we applaud your attempt at striking a balance between the different varied interests. We understand that we are still far from consensus on many issues and look forward to coming closer together under your stewardship. We also note that we need to focus on those elements that need to be captured in the instrument. And we look forward to discussing key priorities for our group including the important topics of financing, compliance and enforcement at the outset which will be critical to ensuring that this new Treaty will be able to deliver on the high aspirations which we place on it.

We also look forward to discussions, when the time is right on key principles and approaches. Some of our key objectives, which we will address this week include the following:

- Special case of SIDS
- Traditional Knowledge
- Disproportionate burden
- Adjacency

We need to build upon the work of the Preparatory Committee. Since the launch of the BBNJ process, we have come a long way and we should not backslide. We must work towards an agreement that is ambitious, equitable, forward thinking and effective.

Madame President,

The format you have suggested for this session is comforting and we welcome your proposal to organize our work through informal working groups. This familiar method worked in the PrepCom, and we are delighted to see that the other three facilitators are back in their seats. As for the fourth facilitator, our group expresses their gratitude for my nomination. It is a humbling and daunting task to follow the footstep of such a skilled facilitator.

To conclude Madame President, the PSIDS intend to continue to constructively engage in this final stage of negotiations in the form of this Intergovernmental Conference to Develop an International Legally Binding instrument. Thanks to the donors of the trust fund, several PSIDS representatives from capital were able to attend this session. For a region constituted by over 98% of ocean and whose civilizations have been built on a symbiotic relationship with the marine environment, participation and engagement in this process is crucial. We are also thankful to other partners who have supported us over the years in better understanding the very complex topics discussed in this forum. These partnerships have also contributed to our ability to engage with you today. We know we still have much work to do and are confident that with you as the Captain of our canoe, we are ready to paddle the high seas with you.

I thank you.