

PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

United Nations Member States



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**Statement by the Pacific Small Islands Developing States
at the opening of the Third Substantive Session of the 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**

Monday 19th August 2019, New York

[Check against delivery]

Madam President,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the 12 Pacific Small Island Developing States present at the United Nations, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Fiji and we are pleased to be, once again, joined by the Cook Islands in this statement.

We align ourselves with the statements delivered by the respective Chairs for G77 and China, the Alliance of Small Island States and the Pacific Islands Forum.

Madam President,

The Pacific SIDS wish to commend you on your leadership and the exemplary manner in which you have steered this process to date. We particularly acknowledge the laudable approach you continue to take in reaching out, prior to the Conference, to brief various UN groups, including PSIDS, allowing for a free flow exchange of views on the conduct of IGC 3. This has been most helpful to us in our own preparations and we further encourage this.

We extend our appreciation to you Madam President for the thoughtful drafting and timely release of the draft text which in its current form serves as a good launching pad for us to deliberate on. We also thank the Secretariat for their tireless efforts throughout this entire process.

We are especially pleased that you have heeded to our call with the early release of the meeting modality as well as the effort taken to ensure that there are as few parallel meetings as possible. This is particularly important for delegations such as ours with capacity limitations. Despite our limitations, our commitment has not wavered.

We have carefully studied and dissected the draft text in preparation for this third session and as always, you have the assurances of the Pacific SIDS of our commitment to this process, to open and frank discussions and to ensuring that we meet the 2020 deadline.

Madam President,

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It would be remiss of me not to speak to a few key priorities for the Pacific SIDS as we go into these important negotiations.

Firstly, the future BBNJ instrument, needs to be fair, equitable, effective, and should address our specific needs to support us in the implementation of our obligations and rights under UNCLOS and the future instrument. Due to our unique vulnerabilities and challenges, we see recognition of the special circumstances of SIDS with regards to Oceans as critical and necessary to ensure equity.

Secondly, as Pacific SIDS we have always believed that the wealth of knowledge gathered by our ancestors over generations is an invaluable and evolving knowledge that needs to inform our management and conservation decisions in the ABNJ. Traditional knowledge systems are a complement to science and should be reflected in the new BBNJ instrument as such.

Thirdly, it is important to give due consideration to all impacts on the health and productivity of the Ocean when crafting and implementing the BBNJ instrument. Any decision in relation to the BBNJ instrument must be taken with the wider context in mind, which includes consideration of the cumulative impacts of existing stressors and projections, including the adverse impacts of climate change and Ocean acidification.

Finally, tied to the call for keeping in mind the 'people' and 'process' consultations is of utmost importance when concerning activities in ABNJ adjacent to coastal states due to the impacts these activities may cause.

Madam President,

Pacific SIDS maintains its commitment to completing our work so that we are able to adopt a treaty in 2020. We recognize the challenges in meeting this deadline but believe that with the collective effort of the whole, this is achievable. We are committed to working constructively with you, the Bureau members, and all delegations to ensure steady but sure progress to meeting this end.

I thank you.