



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement of H.E. Mr. V. Va'inga Tone
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations
Head of Delegation**

**At 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**

First substantive session, on Agenda Item 6: General Exchange of Views

New York, Tuesday, 04th September 2018

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Madam President,

At the outset, allow me to commend and thank you for your ongoing leadership thus far and shepherding us to the start of our journey with you at the helm. You have provided us with coordinates as a guide through your Aid for Discussions, building on the good work of the Preparatory Committee, to help see us through the uncharted waters that lie ahead.

Our delegation knows you both personally and professionally as a proud daughter of a small island developing State, Singapore, and is confident in your captaincy to see us through to pacific waters at the end of our process. We are cognizant of the enormity of the work placed upon you and as always, Tonga commits itself to supporting you, your bureau, and facilitators, and to help carry the yoke placed upon your shoulders.

In so saying, we wish to align ourselves with the statements delivered by Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Maldives on behalf of AOSIS, and Palau on behalf of the Pacific SIDS.

Madam President,

As a small island developing State, indeed, also a large developing ocean state, the convening of this First Session of the Intergovernmental Conference provides a significant milestone for us. Together as custodians of this one entire planet and its one ocean, it is ever necessary for us to ensure we carry out our common responsibility in protecting, conserving, and sustainably utilizing our marine living resources for the benefit of all humankind, for both present and future generations to come.

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Madam President,

Our commitment to upholding and the strengthening of international law, and in particular the Convention on the Law of Sea, is to ensure we all have a fair and equitable say in the management of, and benefit from, our one ocean. That there is an equilibrium struck in an instrument between all interests, from those that have, and those that do not, in the appropriate conservation and sustainable use of our shared living resources in the high seas and the Area. Indeed, we have a common interest, a common concern, in the management of our heritage, for all of us today, and for all of those in future.

Madam President,

We pay tribute to those who committed themselves to the process leading us to this juncture from the Ad Hoc Open-Ended Working Group, to the Preparatory Committee. The Aid for Discussion, building on the report of the Preparatory Committee, has laid a strong foundation upon which we shall build upon in order to progress efforts forward in a collaborative and constructive manner, towards a zero draft of the instrument which shall capture our collective aspirations and interests in a balanced and fair manner. This in turn will help ensure that we achieve an instrument which is universal, inclusive, forward-thinking, and practicable.

Madam President,

Finally, with “all hands on deck”, Tonga is ready to actively engage and we are determined to build on the accomplishments of the past so that we all move forward together in a *gung-ho* spirit of consensus and ambition. It is only through such an approach, and with your guidance, together with your bureau, and facilitators, that we shall reach our destination.

I thank you Madam President