



**PERMANENT MISSION of the
KINGDOM of TONGA to the UNITED
NATIONS**

Statement delivered by:

His Excellency Mr. Viliami Va‘inga Tōnē
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the
United Nations

**2020 United Nations 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

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UNHQ, CR4

[Check against delivery]

Thank you, Co-Facilitators.

I count every opportunity given to speak on behalf of my country, the Kingdom of Tonga, a blessing especially when it is to discuss sustainable ways to conserve our oceans and marine resources. This is noting that decisions we make on this subject now and years to come will have an enormous impact on the world we, our children and grandchildren inherit.

It is for that, Tonga aligns itself with the statements delivered by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), Tuvalu on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and Fiji on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

Before delving any further, I would like to congratulate you, Co-facilitators, on your appointment and wish to convey our support for you in this process.

With regard to the political declaration, Tonga would like certain key priorities reflected as has been alluded to in previous interventions.

And in doing so, we would like amplified herein the important role Science and Innovation plays in navigating a country's journey to ensure sustainable socio-economic development and use, while food security is maintained. More to note, the complementary relationship between Oceans and Climate Change is becoming more critical than ever before thus requiring us to highlight and emphasize it as such.

Co-Facilitators,

Recognizing the role of Science in confirming that the future of our oceans is at serious risk has alarmed us to act without delay. Accordingly, Tonga has committed to designating 30% of our EEZ as marine protected areas, designating areas for whale sanctuaries within our EEZ, developing and finalizing a Marine Spatial Plan and a Sustainable Oceans Policy, to name but a few.

A recent scientific survey was conducted by an overseas company and published in Tonga issued an alarming finding stating that *“Tonga's coral reef fish communities are dominated by small fish, considered low on the food chain, raising concern for the long-term sustainability of the fishery.”* This scientific survey illustrates the importance of science in guiding decision makers in sustainable fishery and marine conservation.

Co-Facilitators,

With the aforementioned, I join like-minded friends in emphasizing that Science-based and innovative areas of action are crucial to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 14 that we have set with targets to achieve. Effective management of the marine environment and maintenance and restoration of marine ecosystem's health and integrity is fundamental to our overarching goal of ecologically sustainable development. And to which Science and Innovation will be useful in realizing the aforementioned.

Co-Facilitators,

It would be injudicious to ignore the recent natural disasters in my home country where frequent Tropical Cyclones and Sea Level Rise have acted in complementary manners devastating some of the low-lying areas of the outer islands. We would therefore like to echo the strong correlation between Climate Change and Oceans raised by those before us.

As had already been mentioned several times before and we would like to again utter herein that rising surface temperatures have deoxygenated large part of the oceans and led to coral bleaching. Rising CO2 emissions continue to worsen ocean acidification. These have caused devastating effects on marine biodiversity which has been the case in Tonga.

Co-Facilitators,

Tonga sees this as an opportunity to build a unified path towards achieving SDG 14 and in doing so, a successful one requires us all to identify with the notion that production and trade of goods and services from our oceans would be very difficult and costly to revitalize and restore once lost. Tonga hopes that Science and Innovation will be developed, matured, and made accessible in order to help in mitigating adverse impacts of climate change on oceans while endeavoring to acquire a healthy, resilient and productive marine environment.

I thank you.

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