



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES
United Nations Member States

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Statement on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States

Intergovernmental consultations on the declaration for the 2020 UN Conference to support the implementation of SDG 14.

Comments on the zero draft

(23 March 2020)

Co-Facilitators,

I have the honor to submit this statement on behalf of the Members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and we align our statement with the Statement submitted by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and with the statement submitted on behalf of G77 & China.

Co- Facilitators,

We wish to firstly take this moment to express through you Co-facilitators our solidarity and unity to those States that had been infected with COVID-19. Our hearts and prayers of healing to families and friends of our colleagues from other delegations within the UN family that had been infected. The PSIDS family is a firm believer of unity, and through unity, we can all overcome this global challenge.

Co-facilitators

At the outset, we commend and applaud your leadership in overseeing this intergovernmental preparatory process to achieve an agreed declaration that focuses on, and highlights, the science-based and innovative areas of action to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

PSIDS welcomes the alternative that you have identified for us to continue our discussions and negotiations during these challenging times. We are also confident without any doubt on the responsibility entrusted upon you as pen holders of this process, that you will adhere to a transparent and inclusive process to achieve an intergovernmental agreed declaration that is brief, concise and action-oriented.

Thank you for an excellent zero draft that has set a decent platform to begin our discussion. We note that the draft captures some of PSIDS concerns and we believe that it can be improved further to be more comprehensive.

In this connection we wish to reiterate once again the importance of addressing the crisis in the Ocean including plastic pollution and overfishing as well as climate change and related phenomena such as Ocean heating and Ocean acidification. Marine science and innovation are needed if we are to achieve SDG14. Having access to accurate scientific data will help Governments especially SIDS, and all stakeholders make better policy decisions which in turn will help us meet our development goals in a more efficient but also sustainable manner.

In addition, we like to stress the importance of scientific knowledge, research and capacity building to developing states like PSIDS. Eloquently reflecting this in the political declaration will address this concern and we suggest mirroring para 12 of resolution 71/312 in the declaration will suffice.

PSIDS are in the front line battling the adverse impacts of climate change and related phenomena on our oceans, including the rise in Ocean temperatures, Ocean and coastal acidification, deoxygenation, sea level rise to name a few; climate change is perhaps one of the most monumental threats to our oceans and the appropriate science and innovation needs to be developed that helps to study its effects further but also to help boost existing mitigation efforts.

The ‘Call for Action’ at the 2017 UN Ocean Conference makes reference to this and the Pacific SIDS want to see the same reflected in the political declaration. We also note there is no reference to the SAMOA Pathway in this draft like in the 2017 Call for action, in this connection the PSIDS will propose that the political declaration makes reference to the SAMOA Pathway.

Ocean science and technology plays a key role in having informed and effective conservation and management measures. In this regard, we wish to underscore the role of traditional knowledge and we believe that traditional knowledge systems are a complement to science. We are encouraged that the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea (A/74/70) acknowledges the need to strengthen the integration of the traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities into Ocean science.

While we appreciate the reference to traditional knowledge in paragraph 11(e), we suggest for consideration the possibility of strengthening the language elsewhere. For example, in paragraph 11(i) after “best available science” we could consider the insertion of “and, as appropriate, traditional knowledge” as highlighted in the Paris Agreement, article 7, paragraph 5. This is also in line with similar language in paragraph 10 of the Call for Action as pertaining to assessments of the state of the Ocean, as well as with current discussions for the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. Given that the theme of the conference includes “innovation” we could also suggest the inclusion of a reference to the innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities alongside the existing reference to traditional knowledge in paragraph 11(e); as well as a reference in the same paragraph 11(e) to respecting,

protecting, and maintaining such innovations, practices, and traditional knowledge. These references would be in line with Section 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity and paragraph 117 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

While we appreciate the reference in paragraph 10(e) to “nature-based solutions for carbon sequestration” we could consider expanding that to include “and enhancing resilience” so that nature-based solutions would not be limited to carbon sequestration (mitigation) but also include building resilience (adaptation).

We further stress the importance of marine scientific research and the collection and sharing of data and knowledge of the Ocean, including traditional knowledge. We must strengthen existing and develop new integrated multi-hazard warning systems to alert population and authorities to allow for timely actions. We therefore emphasize collective action to be taken to address effective risk and disaster management to assist developing States like PSIDS and therefore strongly suggest including paragraph 13(f) of resolution A/Res/71/312 either after paragraph 11 (d) or (e).

Lastly, we note that you have captured in paragraph 10 of the zero draft the targets that will be maturing in 2020 and we notice with interest that the zero draft can be strengthened by also stressing the importance of target 14.6.

To conclude, the PSIDS would like to stress that the current crisis poses by COVID-19 should remind all of us of the importance of protecting our Ocean as the whole world will be looking to the Ocean for vaccines and new medication.

Co-facilitators,

Thank you for this opportunity and I assure you of PSIDS support in this process.