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**Statement delivered by Ambassador Satyendra Prasad, Permanent Representative of Fiji  
to the United Nations**

**2020 UN Ocean Conference-Preparatory Meeting**

**4-5 February 2020**

**UNHQ**

Thank you Co-Facilitators,

The Political Declaration for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Oceans Conference must place people and their communities at its heart. The political declaration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference is quintessentially about people and their communities – nothing more- nothing less.

Fijians, their livelihoods and indeed their very identities are shaped by their relationship with the oceans.

Fisheries in Fiji consists of coastal commercial and artisanal fisheries, offshore-locally based fisheries and aquaculture and is a key driver for our economy.

Our fisheries is threatened by the increase in marine pollution including micro-plastics and global warming. 67% of fish caught near our coasts contained traces of micro-plastics. SDG 14 is therefore a target about food security first. Our Tuna is migrating outwards.

This political declaration must be bold. If we are to gauge our progress.

Ana from Galoa in Fiji ventures out every day to fish for a daily meal. She catches less and less fish; and on some days none at all. On days like the latter, she has to buy processed canned fish for her family. How is it that in a country surrounded by oceans like most others in the Pacific, one



of the most common food at the dinner table is cheap canned imported processed fish rather than fresh fish.

Co-Facilitators,

Lack of progress in SDG 14 underscores her inability to place a healthy meal for her children. Health and SDG 14 is intricically interlinked. As is education, as is hunger, as is nearly all the other SDG's.

- We restate the unambiguous link between a healthy marine environment; SDGs including those relating to poverty, hunger, decent work, climate, biodiversity and gender equality among others.
- We have called for collaboration in data sharing. The gap in capabilities for ocean data analysis and science between our national institutions and the world is growing. We are merely saying we do not wish to become spectators in the growth and development of ocean science and analytics.
- We have called for an end to IUU. This goes way beyond SDG14. \$1-2 billion of Pacific tuna industry is IUU. This is more than the total FDI in the Pacific in any year. If you reduce IUU, you unleash resources for achieving SDG14 and indeed all other SDG's.

Co-facilitator, SDG 14 will grow on us. Make progress, we will improve health and reduce poverty faster than anything else. Fiji will look to the Ocean Conference to understand how it can close the loop between science, policy and programs.

The Declaration and the Conference is not unconnected from the wider UNDS reforms that the UNSG is leading on. We expect that the UN as a system will provide cohesive, joined up, just in



time support to countries to accelerate progress in SDG 14 and in their broader development of their blue economies.

We could not be entering into the 2<sup>nd</sup> conference in more optimistic times. You have heard that countries are making progress; that range of solutions are being implemented; that even finances is not a problem. What we face is a problem of pulling the pieces together – cohesively, in ways that countries with varying capabilities can make sense of and drive forward.

Co-facilitators, our declarations is not disconnected from our UN at 75 reflections. This is a year to recommit ourselves to our founding ideals. UN at 75 is a call to us member states to go our job.

And our job is to respond to those challenges like that amplified in the daily life of Ana. The Fijian government can and is planting more blue and green trees and this may help restore fish stocks. It certainly cannot do much to cool the temperatures of the Southern pacific that is killing her coral reef that spawns these fish stocks in the first place. That is our job – to find solutions to those problems that require international collaboration and cooperation.

Co-facilitators, I thank you.

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