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2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

Meeting between the Co-facilitators and the Pacific SIDS

Statement by Ambassador Chigiya

New York, 4 February 2022

Co-facilitators,

Let me start by expressing Micronesia's trust in your leadership and pledge our full support. We are grateful that we are meeting today. We are generally satisfied with the direction the text of the declaration is heading. The outstanding work involves a few minor tweaks and some updates to reflect important developments which have occurred since the informal consultations in 2020. Let me briefly list possible new elements:

- We support a reference to the International Law Commission's ongoing work on sea-level rise in relation to international law, which in our view helps to implement SDG 14 – particularly its Target 14.c – by contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources through, among other things, clarifying the relationship between climate change-related sea-level rise and maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- We support references to the Paris Agreement and the annual dialogue in the UNFCCC SBSTA on the Climate-ocean nexus, which underscores the central role that the Ocean plays in the climate system, and vice versa, with clear impacts on the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources;
- We support referencing the importance of UNEA's current discussion on the possible launching of intergovernmental negotiations on an international legally binding treaty to address marine plastic pollution;
- We support referencing the intersessional work for the BBNJ Intergovernmental Conference, and the strong hope shared across the international community that the Conference finalizes the BBNJ instrument this year.

- In addition, two elements in the draft declaration should be slightly tweaked to bring them in line with agreed language. In paragraph 10(b) the language on restoring fish stocks deviates from the language in Target 14.4 which reads: to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield.

In paragraph 11(h), rather than saying, “informed by the best-available science, and as relevant, traditional knowledge” we would prefer it to read, “best-available science and relevant traditional knowledge”. This is the same point raised by the Pacific Islands Forum during the consultations this past Tuesday and is meant to avoid the subtle but clear impression in that paragraph that traditional knowledge is of lesser status or relevance than best available science.

Next there are a few elements we would like to retain, like the reference to UNCLOS in paragraph 7; the same had been included in the 2017 declaration. And in the chapeau of paragraph 11, we welcome the mention of SIDS and LDCs. We would not want it diluted by randomly adding other groupings. It is a fact that those are the two are the ones most in need as they are the smallest and the poorest amongst the international community.

Finally we would propose to add a reference to oil leaks from shipwrecks as well as unexploded ordinances in those shipwrecks, including wrecks of warships such as those that litter the Pacific Ocean dating from World War II. Paragraph 10(c) of the draft declaration references the reduction of “marine pollution of all kinds,” including from “sea-based activities,” but it is not clear whether such references encompass the dangers of leaks and unexploded ordinances from otherwise static wrecks and similar relics in the Ocean. One possible tweak is to have a wider coverage for Paragraph 10(c), so that it covers “sea-based activities and sites” as well as “land-based activities and sites,” and then include a reference to leaks and unexploded ordinance alongside the current reference to noise pollution. We trust that you will take this into consideration when revising the draft declaration.

I thank you!