

**Pacific Islands Forum
with United Nations Missions**

Australia, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji,
Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau,
Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands,
Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.



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**Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) statement for the intergovernmental consultations on the
declaration for the 2022 United Nations Conference to support the implementation of
Sustainable Development Goal 14.**

Statement delivered by Fiji as Chair of the PIF

1 February 2022

Mr. President,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 Member States of the Pacific Islands Forum with presence here in New York., namely, Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji.

As Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum, allow me to extend our appreciation to all member states, development partners, donors, and the United Nations systems in the Pacific for their ongoing efforts to support the government of the Kingdom of Tonga in their recovery efforts after the devastating impact caused by the volcanic eruption of 14 January 2022.

We welcome the appointment of the Co-Facilitators, Permanent Representative of Grenada, H.E. Ms. Keisha McGuire and the re-appointment of H.E. Mr. Martin Bille Hermann, the Permanent Representative of Denmark and look forward to robust discussions during the intergovernmental consultations on the declaration for the 2022 United Nations Conference to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14.

Mr. President,

We welcome the current draft Declaration and thank the Co- Facilitators for the work undertaken thus far especially dealing with the pandemic over the last two years. In moving this work forward, our group remains committed to actively engaging in the process.

We wish to register some initial comments which we hope will strengthen the Declaration. We note the lack of reference to the economic impact caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and we consider the Ocean economy as a catalyst for long-term, inclusive and sustainable development.

We recognise the significance of enhancing science-based and innovative approaches to promote a resilient, sustainable recovery within the context of Oceans economy in order to advance nature-based solutions for oceans.

We welcome the reference to marine plastic litter, and we encourage the use of scientific approaches and innovation as a redress for marine plastic litter that is already in the ocean. Furthermore, in addition to the references to oil seepage, sewage, agricultural and aquaculture runoff and industrial waste, we also believe in focusing on nuclear contamination to ensure this source of pollution is also addressed and managed.

We are concerned that the health and sustainability of our ocean is now – more than ever – under threat, including from climate change. Climate change impacts such as Ocean warming, acidification, and deoxygenation, as well as sea-level rise, pose grave threats to Small Island Developing States and low-lying communities around the world that depend on and have close connections to the Ocean, including those of our Forum members. The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise seeks to address one aspect of these threats but much more needs to be done.

Additionally, recognising the vital role that the Ocean plays in the climate system, we propose targeted references in the Declaration to the UNFCCC and its Paris Agreement and ongoing intergovernmental processes addressing the Ocean-climate nexus, including the recently launched annual dialogue in the UNFCCC SBSTA on strengthening Ocean-based action under the UNFCCC multilateral process.

Without the benefit of focused, well-financed and innovative science undertaken in the spirit of cooperation between governments, civil society and other relevant stakeholders we risk inaction and backsliding when we can least afford it.

We also support the references in the draft to the important role of the relevant traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of Indigenous Peoples and local communities as a complement to the best available science for Ocean action. Indeed, the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, among other intergovernmental documents and processes, recognises such a role. In this connection, we propose a slight tweak to paragraph 11(h) to say, “that policy is informed by the best-available science and relevant traditional knowledge.” This removes the word “as” and a couple of commas from the current text, which we think unnecessarily minimises the complementary and integral role of traditional knowledge.

As we reflect on the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration, we must collectively enhance our understanding of the Ocean; strengthen the Ocean science and policy interface and focus on effective implementation of all commitments made while going further, to ensure a thriving Ocean now and for the future.

I thank you.