Statement on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States for Intergovernmental Consultations on the Declaration for the 2022 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development
Delivered by Ambassador Fatumanava-o-Upolu Pa’olelei Luteru
Tuesday 1st of February 2022

[Check against delivery]

Co-Facilitators,

I am pleased to deliver the following remarks on behalf of the twelve members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States.

As Pacific SIDS we align ourselves with the statement delivered by G77+China, AOSIS and PIF.

We first like to congratulate the co-facilitators of Denmark and Grenada on their appointment and express our group’s full support. Pacific SIDS welcome and support the reopening of the Political Declaration for review and update and note that the existing 2020 text is a solid launching pad for further negotiations.

Co-Facilitators,

The Pacific SID have certain key priorities we would like to see reflected in the final declaration:
A. COVID-19 and Importance of Blue recovery

The current draft text does not mention the COVID-19 pandemic and the importance of blue recovery, which we consider important to include. SIDS are among the most vulnerable countries to the impacts (COVID-19) crisis, which is disrupting key economic sectors that our already fragile economies rely upon. As large Ocean states, investing in ocean health through sustainable blue economy activities, that also tackle climate change is a top priority. There is an unprecedented opportunity, through global stimulus and recovery responses to the pandemic, to accelerate ocean-based climate solutions to reduce greenhouse gases and improve coastal resilience reset and rebuild economic activities in ways that will ensure a more sustainable, equitable and resilient
ocean economy fit for everyone’s future.

B. Inclusion of the Paris Agreement

The Pacific SIDS note with grave concern that ocean health is in a precarious state – and climate change is a major driver of its decline. This has caused significant changes, including ocean warming acidification, deoxygenation and sea level rise with severe impacts on ocean and coastal lives and livelihoods of coastal communities. Therefore, we see the value of the inclusion of the Paris Agreement, which is currently missing in the draft declaration, given that it is the legally binding international treaty on climate change. In addition, given the inclusion of the ocean-nexus within the UNFCCC process with an established annual dialogue, whereby there is recognition of the role of the ocean for climate action, we strongly believe it is critical that the Paris Agreement be included in any discussions around climate change, adaptation, mitigation and oceans because of the interlinkages.

C. Maritime Boundaries and sea-level rise

Our concerns over climate change and its effects on the Ocean also extend to our maritime zones and the need to secure them, and the rights and the entitlements that flow from them without reduction even in the face of rising sea-levels. This is reflected in the Declaration of Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate-Change Related Sea-Level Rise endorsed by the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum in 2021, setting out our region’s collective position on how the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea rules on maritime zones must apply in the situation of climate change-related sea-level rise. The Pacific SIDS subscribe to the position that preserving maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them gives expression not only to the foundation principles of equity and stability, but also to the notions of climate justice deeply rooted in human rights and the principles of international law.

We recommend that the Declaration of Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate-Change Related Sea Level Rise be referenced in the Draft declaration.
D. Science-based, innovation and traditional knowledge

We are no stranger to the capacity constraints that are faced by many developing states and welcome the innovative solutions proposed in the Draft Declaration to address the challenges in achieving Goal 14. It is important to ensure that efforts to increase scientific knowledge, capacity building and technology transfer (target 14.a), focus on the countries that need it most. Effective and durable partnerships, innovative ocean technologies, data and sustainable engineering solutions as well as robust capacity building are areas to improve on.

We continue to emphasize the vital role of traditional knowledge of indigenous people and local communities, for we believe that traditional knowledge systems are a complement to science. Indeed, the UN Decade on Ocean Science for sustainable development recognizes the integral role of traditional knowledge for ocean development.

E. Marine Plastic Pollution

We welcome the language on eliminating long-term discharges of marine plastic litter and microplastics into the ocean in our collective effort to curb plastic pollution. The diverse negative impacts of plastic on sustainability clearly demonstrate that we must deal with a tough and persistent problem. We must come together to prevent and reduce marine pollution including plastics, oil spills, discharge of waste and nuclear contaminants. Pacific SIDS contribute less than 1.3 percent of the mismanaged plastics in the world’s oceans yet are one of the main recipients of plastics pollution and its impacts. International efforts to sustain healthy oceans are desperately needed now.

F. Fisheries

Fisheries are the lifeblood of our economies and an integral part of our culture. The challenges to healthy fish stocks and the need to combat them are enshrined in Goal 14. We are therefore concerned that the current draft declaration may be taking us backwards. For example, the draft is missing the element of urgency in target 4. We also
believe that our aspirations should remain, as they were when SDG 14 was adopted, of restoring stocks to levels that can produce at least maximum sustainable yield (MSY). MSY- should be the floor, not the ceiling.

Given the theme of the conference is science and innovation, we also see value in reflecting on innovations which can lead to more effective measures to trace fish and fisheries products, to identify those which were caught in a manner that undermines international conservation and management measures.

**Co-facilitators,**
We look forward to collaborating with you and other delegations to ensure that the Draft Declaration articulates clearly the huge potential of the sustainable ocean economy and achieving SDG14 and the 2030 agenda, as a whole.

Thank you.