

**INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES GROUP (PSIDS) AT THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE FOR THE OCEAN 2022**

**Interactive Dialogue:** #3 Minimizing and addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming

**Date:** Wednesday 29 June 2022 (10am-1pm)

**Location:** Tejo Hall, Altice Arena

**Time Limit:** 3 minutes

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

It is an honor to be part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations Ocean Conference and to speak on behalf of Pacific SIDS at this interactive dialogue on addressing ocean acidification, deoxygenation and ocean warming.

Ocean acidification caused by the increased absorption of carbon into the ocean alters the chemical balance of seawater and impacts the ability of coral and other marine species to survive in the Ocean. The Ocean is an interconnected and interdependent ecosystem and the loss of important life forms such as coral and plankton further weakens the ability of the Ocean to function as a bountiful home to fish stocks which are the lifeblood of Pacific economies.

The ocean surrounds, protects and provides for the Pacific. As Pacific Island peoples, our ocean is our biggest resource. Ocean acidification poses a serious threat to our marine biodiversity and ecosystem services and ultimately impacts on our livelihoods. With decreasing seawater concentration of carbonate ions, marine life, including calcifying plankton and algae, shellfish, sea urchins, and corals, will find it more

difficult to build their skeletons and shells. This will lead to a reduction in growth for many of these species and ecosystems which will impact on the diversity of our ecosystems, our food supply, and our way of life.

SIDS are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of Ocean acidification, especially in relation to coral depletion. Coral reefs play a key role in ocean ecosystems and can help dissipate up to 97% of wave energy. Weakened coral reefs also mean that SIDS are more vulnerable to the impacts of rising sea levels, increasing severity of tropical cyclones and increasing occurrence of king tides. Globally, over 50% of the countries that have high dependence on coral reefs are located in the Pacific. Our reliance on and connection to the ocean cannot be understated as demonstrated by our particular vulnerability to ocean events, such as increased ocean acidification.

The impacts of climate change, including ocean acidification and sea-level rise, remain the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the Pacific. We must also note that many countries (including Annex 1 countries under the UNFCCC) that have large EEZs are not fully documenting the impacts caused by increasing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to regional food security, ocean industries or marine economies. In order to address this existential threat, the Pacific calls for renewed commitment and focus on SDG 14.3 on measuring ocean acidification through enhanced scientific cooperation.

PSIDS calls for countries to strengthen international, regional, sub-regional and national efforts on measuring ocean acidification and data collection and the sharing of best practices relating to ocean acidification. In partnership with dedicated development partners, PSIDS is working in this area through initiatives such as the Pacific Partnership on Ocean Acidification (PPOA) and the Pacific Island Ocean Acidification Centre (PIOAC).

Another avenue to address Ocean acidification is to incorporate Ocean acidification and other ocean-climate change indicators across a range of universally accepted adaptation strategies like disaster risk management and recovery, cost-benefit frameworks, early warning systems, climate services, and risk spreading. PSIDS also emphasises the role of effective partnerships which must include a variety of stakeholders - public-private, cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary and others to galvanise action at all levels including at the community level to understand Ocean acidification, its impacts on our communities and how it can be addressed, including impacts on cultural practices and traditions connected to coral reef systems that are threatened by Ocean acidification.

To meet the development needs of SIDS, the global community must place emphasis on the requisite financing for successfully achieving targets under SDG 14.

From this dialogue, we would like to see donors and development partners significantly increase and simplify access to climate financing for ocean and coastal climate monitoring and research, risk assessments and remediation or adaptation measures. The PPOA is an example that should continue to be supported and replicated as a measure to assist countries to understand how to address the impacts of Ocean acidification.

I thank you, Distinguished Co-Chairs.