



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT BY HON. JEREMIAH MANELE, (MP), MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL TRADE DURING THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE FROM 27 JUNE TO JULY 1st, 2022, LISBON PORTUGAL

Co-Presidents,

Head of Delegations,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon/morning and warm greetings from the Solomon Islands.

Mr. President,

At the outset, let me extend on behalf my delegation our sincere gratitude to Portugal and Kenya for your collaborative leadership in co-hosting and convening this second United Nations Ocean Conference, supporting the implementation of the **Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life below water**.

We are a nation of islands. The ocean defines who we are as people and nation. It is a key pillar of our development, and the foundation of our future. In this connection, the health of our ocean is crucial to the wellbeing of our people and planet, and all forms of life below and above water.

Mr. President, I wish to update you on some of our voluntary commitments made in the first UN Ocean Conference.

- a) The first Voluntary Commitment was to develop an Integrated National Ocean Policy and Marine Spatial Plan. The Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy was launched on 25 November 2019. The Solomon Islands National Ocean Policy has 11 aspects to implement and carries the vision of the Government and the people of Solomon Islands to “achieve a healthy, resilient, secure and productive ocean that supports sustainable use and development for the benefit of the people of Solomon Islands now and into the future”.
- b) Another key aspect of integrated ocean governance is Marine Spatial Planning. Between 2019 and 2021, Solomon Islands carried out nation-wide consultations and is now in the process of finalizing its Marine Spatial Plan. The outcome of this work will guide us in enacting a legal framework or ocean law that will oversee the governance and management of our ocean space. The conservation target is to achieve 15% of Marine Protected Areas and locally marine managed areas, in alignment with our national target and that of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- c) The Solomon Islands Government has also made voluntary commitments to strengthen Community Based Resource Management (CBRM) initiatives to contribute to fulfilling SDG 14. Solomon Islands launched its 10-year National Fisheries Policy in 2019 which provides the basis for a Solomon Islands CBRM strategy, 2021 – 2025. This strategy outlines a concerted set of activities to scale up CBRM support to more communities across the Solomon Islands as well as improve the quality of CBRM support provided to communities through the development of key national level systems and increased capacity and involvement of Provincial authorities. For us, communities are and must always be in the frontlines of ocean governance.
- d) The Solomon Islands faces huge challenges in dealing with pollution management given the growth in diversity of the types of wastes, of which most lack sustainable and economically viable end-of-life treatment options nationally. What is clear is

that, the most difficult wastes which often become sources of marine pollution arise from materials that are trade related such as plastics. Nevertheless, we have a national waste management and pollution control strategy that provides guidance for the measures we take and will develop to address marine pollution. Furthermore, we are amending our Environment Legislation to enable application of pollution control measures including the banning of materials that give rise to wastes that lack in-country management measures.

- e) Solomon Islands further committed to delineate and conclude all its maritime zones and boundaries. Of the five overlapping and shared Maritime Boundaries, the only Maritime boundary that remained to be signed is with Fiji. Negotiations have been concluded with our Fiji counterparts and we are ready to sign the maritime boundary treaty at the margins of the PIF 51st Leaders' summit which will be held from 12 to 14 July, 2022 in Suva, Fiji.
- f) Given the climate change crisis and the impacts of Climate Change related Sea Level Rise on maritime zones and boundaries entitlements, a side letter will also be signed by Prime Ministers from both countries. This side letter contains the stability clause that aligns with Pacific Islands Forum Leader Declaration on preserving maritime zones and boundaries in the event of climate change related sea level rise.
- g) Tuna is a highly migratory resources found in the Exclusive Economic Zones of all Pacific Islands States. Solomon Islands rely on Tuna Fisheries for food security, employment, and it substantially contributes to our national revenue. To improve management of our tuna stock, Solomon Islands commits to apply Vessel Day Scheme (VDS) within all our national waters and to all Fishing vessels operating in these waters.
- h) Additionally, Solomon Islands supports the Tuna Traceability Declaration by World Economic Forum, Solomon Islands is currently developing a digitally integrated catch documentation and traceability scheme for one of our fishing ports and that it is envisaged to be used nationally. Solomon Islands is also implementing an

Electronic Monitoring Program to achieve 100% coverage of fishing vessels to deter IUU fishing. These innovative developments need sustainable financing is in place as these tools will inevitably improve how we carry out Port state measures to combat IUU fishing.

Mr. President, even with challenges in terms of capacity, financial resources and competing priorities, the Solomon Islands is doing what it can to address life below water with the support of partners and stakeholders.

In keeping with the intention of coming up with concrete actions to safeguard the health of our ocean, the Solomon Islands hereby make further voluntary commitments in addition to the ones we made in 2017.

1. Establish a legal framework for Ocean Legislation and Commissioner by 2025
2. Contribute to the global 30 x 30 ocean's target of the Biodiversity Framework by further strengthening our indigenous guardianship and our national network of locally managed and protected areas.
3. Solomon Islands is committed to reducing GHG emissions from international and domestic ships and ports.
4. Support the finalization, adoption and entry into force of the international, legally binding instrument such as the BBNJ.
5. Solomon Islands commits to support the finalization and adoption of a legally binding instrument on Marine Plastic Pollution.

Mr. President,

Solutions that protect our precious ocean must put us island people back into the CENTRE of these spaces, physically, culturally, institutionally and economically.

Solutions must GROW our natural systems -land and sea – so that they stabilize our local environments against ocean degradation and climate change. This means dedicated finance mechanisms for nature based solutions to address ocean threats and drive innovative opportunities for sustainable ocean based economies.

Solutions must help us THRIVE where-ever we live, in the villages or cities. Culture, education and livelihoods will underpin the continued guardianship we island peoples

practise over our oceans. We can protect these precious spaces for the world if we are entrusted with the tools and resources to do so.

Solutions for marine pollution must focus on the SOURCES of pollution including the banning of environmentally taxing materials, and to manage the nexus between land and ocean in terms of the flow of materials and energy. In addition, solutions must be context appropriate. Legacy wastes such as unexploded ordinances and oil spills from sunken World War II ships must be addressed. In addition, there is no need for the introduction of toxic materials and wastes in our oceans including nuclear wastes.

There is no point in advocating for the recycling of plastics, when economics and global trade militates against recycling in small island countries. Simplified and cost effective measures, and support for island countries for plastic recycling should be part of the new global agreement on plastics.

Mr. President,

The implementation of 2030 Agenda SDG14 requires and needs meaningful and inclusive collaboration and partnership across sectors and stakeholders. Achieving a healthy, resilient and productive ocean needs global solutions translated into local actions. The world needs to take urgent and firm actions including the availing of dedicated financial resources and technologies to island countries to sustainably conserve, use and protect ocean resources to meet the needs of our present and future generations.

With this few remarks, tagio tumas.