

**Intervention of Hon. Hu'akavameiliku
Hon. Prime Minister of Tonga
Head of Delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga
At the United Nations Ocean Conference to support the implementation of
Goal 14 on Sustainable Development, 2nd Plenary
Interactive Dialogue 5 (ID5)
Lisbon, Tejo Hall, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm, Tuesday, 28th June 2022**

Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries.

Excellencies, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Tonga welcomes the theme of the dialogue.

Indeed, we must reflect on the essential actions needed to build sustainable ocean-based economies and very much so for the Small Island Developing States and Least developed Countries

Our marine ecosystems are at the very core of our Pacific being and culture. With the degradation and the decline in coastal and marine ecosystems due to many factors, we long recognized that we must protect these precious resources.

We must deploy effective policies and management strategies to strengthen sustainable ocean-based economies.

For SDG indicator 14.5., '*protected marine areas*,' we must establish a network of marine protected areas of different forms. There must be a holistic approach to marine spatial planning for successful ocean management in Tonga.

In July 2021, Government endorsed its National Marine Spatial Plan (MSP).

The plan aims to manage Tonga's marine resources and its environment. This plan is the roadmap to meeting Tonga's voluntary commitment at the UN Ocean Conference in New York in 2017.

The commitment to fully protected 30 per cent of its ocean space as marine protected areas. Together with this plan, Government also endorsed the development of Tonga's Blue Economy

The goal of a Blue Economy bears major potential for improving sustainable livelihoods and incomes for Pacific Island States.

The sheer size of a combined Blue Pacific Continent has significant sustainable growth potential.

For example, the Blue Pacific holds 55 per cent of the global tuna stocks. The Blue Pacific also is home to the only healthy tuna stocks compared with other regions. Yet, the region has not enjoyed the just returns from the ocean economy.

Good governance is key to environmental and social sustainability.

Good governance is the driver for sustainable economic outcomes of blue economies.

The principles for the full recognition of the special requirements of developing States in particular Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are contained in various international fisheries treaties. Articles 24 to 26 of the UN Fish Stocks Agreement are examples of these principles but they need to be fully operationalised through the practice of international organisations such as Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs).

Of the RFMOs, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission appears to be ahead in the operationalisation of such principles. It is important that other RFMOs support the operationalisation of the full recognition of the special requirements of SIDS and LDCs.

The full recognition of the special requirements of SIDS is also recognised in the FAO Port State Measures Agreement (PSMA) for fighting IUU fishing.

The PSMA not only sets out the principles on such recognition, but also includes an operational mechanism in the Ad Hoc Working Group to link the special requirements with the resources that are available.

In response, the FAO Secretariat has put in place a global programme to support capacity building and efforts by SIDS to effectively implement their obligations under the PSMA.

The combination of provisions in the PSMA and institutional arrangements have contributed to greater levels of implementation by developing States in particular SIDS and LDCs.

In summary, the full recognition of the special requirements of SIDS, in principle and in practice, will go a long way in promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean based economies.

SIDS in the Pacific continue to see the full recognition of their special requirements as a necessary part of strengthening their engagement in ocean-based economies such as fisheries.

The achievement of SDG target 14.7 by 2030 is at the core of increasing the just and sustainable economic benefits to Small Island developing States and least developed countries through the sustainable use of marine resources. And this must include the sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism) to be advanced through the full recognition of the special requirements of SIDS.

I thank you