



### ***Intervention for Interactive Dialogue 2***

#### ***Promoting and strengthening sustainable ocean-based economies, in particular for small island developing States and least developed countries***

Co- Chairs, your Excellencies, thank you for this opportunity to make a few remarks to complement the very astute discussions we have already heard. I would also like to acknowledge the excellent concept note for this session. For a small island developing state like Tuvalu, the challenges and opportunities are captured well.

Fisheries is a key sector for us, and I am pleased to advise that many of the opportunities identified in the paper are already being pursued in Tuvalu – although market access for the catches of our national fishing fleet requires more work, due to the complex sanitary and phytosanitary systems required by some importers.

Maritime transport is also a key sector for Tuvalu. With our small population scattered across nine islands with significant open ocean distances between each, domestic inter-island shipping is essential but expensive. We would be keenly interested in opportunities for low cost and low carbon alternatives, particularly at this time of rapidly rising fuel prices. In terms of international shipping, our economy is highly dependent on imports, and investment in improved port infrastructure and container handling equipment would do much to facilitate these.

Ocean based solutions for renewable energy are also of great interest, although we recognize that some are still at the research stage. Currently our plans to transition to a carbon neutral energy system are based mainly on land-based solar, but we have a limited land area and land rental costs are high. At least one lagoon would seem to have sufficient tidal flow through an artificially created passage to drive turbines; other have areas of shallow water where we could perhaps place solar panels.

Finally, I would like to comment on the issue of concessional finance for development. Tuvalu has benefited greatly from Official Development Assistance in the 42 years since we became an independent nation, and we are always grateful to our development partners who have supported much of our essential infrastructure. However, our small administration finds it increasingly difficult to handle the procedures and conditions – particularly for the multilateral agencies.

Foreign consultants are engaged to design the programmes, not because of their technical expertise and certainly not for their understanding of local needs, but because they know how to prepare documents required by the funding agency. Each project then requires procurement experts to handle the procurement rules of the donor, accountants who understand their financial systems, etc. Sadly, in spite of all this project management, most programmes are not fully implemented and much needed funds are returned unspent. While I fully understand the need for accountability for these funds, there does seem to be a bit too much red tape, and I would encourage the donor agencies to look at how they might streamline their procedures in providing funds to develop the blue economy of small island developing states.