



### ***Intervention for Interactive Dialogue on Fisheries***

#### ***Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets***

Thank you Excellencies for this opportunity to share my views on this topic, and I would like to thank the speakers and the panelists for their insightful remarks. I also recognize the Secretary General of our own Pacific Islands Forum in the panel – it is good to see you here Mr Puna.

Chairs, sustainable fisheries are central to the economy and food security of my country Tuvalu. Tuvalu is currently chair of the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) which is mentioned in the concept paper as an example of a successful partnership, for its management of the tuna fisheries in our waters under the Vessel Day Scheme. The PNA waters cover most of the main tuna fishing area, and the scheme which we adopted has largely been extended to the wider area of the Western and Central Pacific.

The success of this scheme can be seen in the fact that our ocean is the only one of the four main tuna fishing areas in which all four species of tropical tuna are harvested sustainably. According to the scientists in another of our regional agencies SPC, none of the stocks are overfished and overfishing is not occurring. The scheme sets hard limits on fishing effort through vessel days, checked through a region-wide vessel monitoring system and, in non-COVID times, 100% observer coverage.

It has also proved very successful in extracting rent from the fishery, which is the main source of our Government revenue in Tuvalu. Access fees paid by foreign fishing vessels to buy vessel days are around 20% of the landed value of the catch, and have helped to limit capacity and ensure that the tuna are harvested by an appropriate number of efficient and profitable vessels – the opposite of a fisheries subsidy. I am speaking here about the purse seine fishery which is mainly in our EEZs. In contrast the longline fishery, which mainly operates in the high seas, is less profitable and less well regulated.

The different nature of these two fisheries can also result in a disproportionate burden of conservation action falling on our coastal states. For example, a by-catch of the purse seine fishery is bigeye tuna which is particularly caught in purse seine sets on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs). Bigeye is a target of the tropical longline fishery, where it is the most valuable tropical tuna on sashimi markets. To conserve bigeye, we currently have a ban on fishing on FADS for three months of the year – just starting now at the beginning of July. This imposes a significant cost in reduced catches and efficiency of the purse seine fishery in our waters – but the benefits go to foreign longliners fishing mainly in international waters.<sup>i</sup>

Chairs, one of the many undesirable effects of the COVID pandemic, has been to weaken the monitoring control and surveillance of the fisheries in our EEZ. To protect our people, we were obliged to suspend placing observers, and all boarding and inspection of vessels (at sea and in port). Due to quarantine restrictions we were also unable to host the planned basing of a surveillance aircraft in Tuvalu. However, with support from the World Bank, we have been testing some new and

cutting edge satellite surveillance methods with interesting results. Our commitment, to this meeting, is to restore observer placement by the end of the year, to continue satellite surveillance, and increase aerial and surface patrol activity so as to achieve SDG target 14.4 and eliminate IUU fishing in our waters.

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<sup>i</sup> This section may be omitted in the verbal statement if time is short.