



## UNOC Plenary Session Statement by Caritas Internationalis

### - Tita Kara, Civil Society Forum of Tonga/Caritas Oceania delegate

*In Laudato Si' in 2015, Pope Francis said "our Sister, Mother Earth" was crying out to us because of the harm inflicted by our irresponsible abuse of the goods God endowed her with. Humans have come to see ourselves as LORDS and MASTERS – entitled to plunder her at will. The catalogue of abuses, violence and neglects that humans have shown Mother-Earth, reflect our greed and inconsideration of God's creation. The symptoms of sickness in our societies is evident in the infertilities in the soil, scarcity in water, pollution in the air, and increased frequency and strength of extreme weather events. Mother-Earth is so burdened with waste and pollution, she is among the most ABANDONED AND MALTREATED of all poor, and her groans and wails are falling on deaf ears. Let's not forget that we are dust and our bodies are made up of Earth's elements: the air we breathe and water we drink and the soil we cultivate.*

With this understanding, we in Caritas say:

- Oceania's habitats face threats from coastal development, nutrient loading, sedimentation, disease, invasive species, predator outbreaks, overharvesting & destructive fishing, marine noise, light pollution, ocean acidification and Climate Change.
- Let us not add deep sea mining to our attack on Mother Earth, further undermining her ability to heal, and sustain and provide for us into the future. We call for a ban on seabed mining.
- Oceania alone cannot mitigate climate change impacts. Our pitiful attempt is nothing when over-crowded by irresponsible exploitation and emission. Mitigation and Adaption to climate change is urgently needed
- Limiting global warming to below 1.5°C is crucial. It requires unprecedented change across society. We call for an integrated approach to development that actively cares for the poor.
- We must be confident to make those changes in our lives, communities, and in our work – for a better future in our common home.
- All countries must strengthen policies for mitigation, adaptation and climate finance.
- We need to recognize the urgent need for the conservation, protection and sustainable use of oceanic biodiversity.
- Listen to young people, to elders, to Indigenous and local people who know their place well –heed them in problem-solving, decision-making and implementation.
- Our world requires courage, honesty, responsible, respect and faith.
- Nature has given so much for humanity, it's time we give back to nature by protecting it.
- It means getting involved, getting dirty, getting loud, being upfront and being uncomfortable.