



**PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES**  
**UNITED NATIONS MEMBER STATES**

Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations  
685 Third Ave, Suite 1102  
New York, N.Y. 10017

Phone: (212)599-1658  
Fax: (212)599-0797  
Email: [psidschair@gmail.com](mailto:psidschair@gmail.com)

**INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF THE PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES GROUP (PSIDS) AT THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE FOR THE OCEAN 2022**

**Delivered by Hon Silas Bule Melve, Minister of Climate Change, Republic of Vanuatu**

**Interactive Dialogue: #7** - Enhancing the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law, as reflected in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

**Date:** Thursday 30 June 2022 (3-6pm)

**Time Limit:** 3 minutes

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

It's an honor to be part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> United Nations Ocean Conference and to speak on behalf of Pacific SIDS, at this interactive dialogue.

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

We attach critical importance to the topic for our dialogue today because we consider the ocean and its resources as the lifeblood of our societies. Its sustainable use and effective governance are therefore a top priority that cannot be overstated. Our concerns over climate change and its effects on the ocean also extend to our maritime zones and the need to secure them, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them without reduction even in the face of rising sea-levels. This position is clearly articulated in the *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate change Related sea-level rise*, as adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders last year.

The Pacific SIDS subscribe to the position that preserving maritime zones and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, gives expression not only to the foundation principles of equity and stability, but also to the notion of climate justice deeply rooted in human rights and the principles of international law. We therefore call on UN member states and the international community to support the Pacific Islands Forum Declaration on this issue.

Providing legal certainty regarding maritime zones will greatly enhance the enforcement of conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources within national waters, and respective EEZs of our Pacific family. The Framework for Pacific Oceanscape endorsed by Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in 2010 advocated for the establishment of rights to conserve and sustainably manage marine resources.

2022 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* UNCLOS. Pacific Islands have continued to lead the world as a maritime region with 73% percent of maritime boundaries settled and a high degree of regional cooperation. Whilst the Pacific is at the forefront in settling maritime boundaries, urgent action is still required to preserve maritime zones and the rights and entitlement that flow from them in light of climate change-related sea-level rise.

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

We are alarmed by the global crisis facing our ocean. Its health is under attack from ever-rising temperature, acidification, marine pollution, ecosystem collapse, and rapid biodiversity loss, among other stressors. The challenge is multi-dimensional and interconnected in nature, requiring a multistakeholder response. International efforts are desperately needed now to reverse Ocean stressors, as well as improve and sustain the health, productivity, and resilience of our ocean and its ecosystems.

In this connection, we welcome the recent launching of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for an international legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. A new global instrument must acknowledge the role played by all stakeholders throughout the full plastics lifecycle, from extraction, production, trade, manufacturing, and consumption to waste management and environmental legacy, and recognize the need for global intervention and support for pollution prevention at each stage.

The Pacific SIDS also welcomes the ongoing work within UNCLOS and call for the urgent conclusion of negotiations on an international legally binding instrument under UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. These efforts need to enhance the obligations laid out in UNCLOS to conserve and sustainably use the Ocean and its resources.

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> UN Ocean Conference is an opportunity to re-commit partners to address SDG14 Targets including those scheduled for implementation but have expired. Existing voluntary trust funds under UNCLOS and UNFSA for SIDS and LDCs development purposes have mainly been to facilitate meeting participation. Implementation gaps to achieve targets under SDG14 continue to widen if solutions are not forthcoming to support SIDS and the package of vulnerabilities that exist.

Some possible key outcomes are creating access to ocean financing similar to climate financing; creating access to the SDG Partnerships Framework to determine how the Pacific SIDS can leverage this financing to support oceans related activities; strengthening national ocean policies and the need to ensure sufficient national budgets to meet obligations under MEAs, regional seas conventions having direct linkages to UNCLOS and related instruments, i.e., the Noumea

Convention; and, lastly, ensuring the sustainability of existing funding mechanisms to support SIDS and LDCs to achieve collective realisation of the SDG14 targets and indicators.

There are currently significant data gaps in collection, analysis, studies and research, actions on the ground with profound impact such as reef restoration activities and others. The special circumstances of SIDS are not being sufficiently reflected and addressed in key multilateral negotiations that are ongoing as well as discussions on financial and technological support and opportunities. Since the adoption of the SAMOA Pathway, there has been insufficient recognition and acceptance of the special circumstances of SIDS.

Other key challenges and equally significant challenges underscoring the special circumstances of SIDS are our remoteness and package of vulnerabilities in many aspects e.g., natural disasters, high shipping costs, technology, capacities in science and policy. These underscore the special circumstances of SIDS and the slow progress to get actions on the ground, to be inclusive in project designs, and to achieve effective adoption and implementation of sound policy decisions.

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

In conclusion, the Pacific SIDS call for increased and more targeted cooperation and coordination between member states on the effective implementation of UNCLOS. It is a global issue requiring united global action.

We also strongly appeal to all States to support the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate change Related sea-level rise*. We have thought deeply about how to deal with climate change-related sea-level rise and maritime zones, while upholding the integrity of UNCLOS. We offer our Declaration as a considered, moderate and targeted solution to the issue of sea-level rise and its relationship to maritime zones through a good faith interpretation of UNCLOS.

**Distinguished Co-Chairs,**

I conclude now speaking in Vanuatu's National Capacity:

We must adhere to the principles enshrined within international law, including UNCLOS, and other conventions and treaties that exist to guide us towards sustainable development. I hope that you will support Vanuatu and other vulnerable nations, when we table a Resolution at the UN General Assembly calling for an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States under international law to protect the rights of present and future generations against the adverse effects of climate change.

I thank you.