



STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY TE BERETITENTI TANETI MAAMAU
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Ocean Action Panel 5: Fostering sustainable fisheries management including support for small scale fishers.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates.

The Pacific brings a clear message to this conference:
“Sustain our ocean to secure our future. Invest in Pacific-led fisheries management that protects livelihoods, biodiversity, and global food security.”

Our region is home to the world’s largest tuna fishery, producing over 50% of global tuna supply.

These stocks — are sustainably managed because Pacific Island countries have worked collectively for decades, guided by science, tradition, and strong governance embedding zone-based management rooted in sovereignty and fairness — not just for the Pacific, but for the entire planet.

Our success in sustainability is a model — and a message — to the world: **when we work together, we can sustain the ocean that sustains us all.**

But we must also recognise the cost and commitment of this sustainable management efforts, which require strong institutions, access to data, enforcement capacity, and long-term planning — all of which demand resources.

We call on the global community to recognize the burden that Small Island Developing States carry to sustain the world's tuna supply, through:

- preferential access to international markets for sustainably caught tuna, through full respect for our sovereign rights over tuna stocks even as climate change drives them into the high seas,
- increased and predictable funding to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and
- support for the institutional strengthening that underpins sustainable fisheries governance.

Our coastal and small-scale fisheries are no less important than our offshore fisheries, being deeply entwined with our food systems, local economies, and cultural identities. But they are also the most vulnerable to climate change, overfishing, and habitat degradation.

To protect them, our region has embraced Pacific-owned community-based fisheries management approaches, now implemented in over 1,000 communities across 15 countries and territories. These approaches are showing results.

However, a major gap remains in financing and data systems to support these local solutions. We have an urgent need for increased human and financial investment in monitoring, compliance, and capacity-building for coastal and small-scale fisheries.

Moreover, the climate crisis is already altering the distribution and productivity of both coastal and oceanic fish stocks. This is not a future scenario — it is today's reality. Proactive, science-based adaptation is needed now, yet Pacific SIDS face significant hurdles in accessing the finance and partnerships required to build that resilience.

New and additional, catalytic and risk-tolerant financing must be mobilised to support the full range of adaptation efforts — from nearshore FAD deployment and food security strategies to economic diversification and securing long-term access rights.

And this is not just about resilience. It is about **justice**.

Let us now match that leadership with **partnership**, with **action**, and with **finance**.

I thank you.