

**Statement by the Prime Minister of Niue, Hon. Dalton Tagelagi
General Debate – 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)**

Plenary, 9th June 2025 , Nice, France

Fakaalofa lahi atu, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, friends of the ocean.

Niue is a small island with a large ocean. While our land spans just over 260 square kilometres, our ocean space — our Exclusive Economic Zone — is more than 318,000 square kilometres. For Niue, the ocean is not a resource. It is a relative — central to our identity, our wellbeing, and our future.

We come to UNOC3 with resolve. The time for bold action is now. In 2020, we established the Moana Mahu Marine Protected Area, legally protecting 40% of our waters as a strict no-take zone. In 2022, we declared our entire EEZ as a Multiple-Use Marine Park under the Nukutuluea framework — making Niue one of the few countries in the world with 100% legally managed ocean space, and the 2nd largest no-take MPA by percentage of EEZ. We hope to take this further and link up with our neighbouring islands Tonga, Samoa, the Cook Islands and others via blue corridors

But conservation is only as strong as its foundation. That's why we created the Niue Ocean Wide Trust — a sustainable finance mechanism to secure the long-term protection of our ocean and the resilience of our people.

Through this Trust, we launched the Ocean Conservation Commitments (OCCs) - a direct, innovative instrument for governments, philanthropies, and citizens to invest in marine protection.

We have already raised NZ\$7 million towards our NZD\$32m million target. Once fully capitalised, the Trust will function as a self-sustaining endowment, funding both conservation and a sustainable blue economy reinforcing of ocean protection for generations to come.

We are also proud to be among the first Pacific Island countries to join the Agreement on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction — the BBNJ Treaty. Here in Nice, Niue will formally sign the agreement and begin work toward ratification. This is a signal of our continued commitment to safeguarding the high seas and contributing to the global common good.

Our ocean is also a sanctuary for whales. Niue declared its entire EEZ a in 2003, and we continue to advocate for their protection as part of broader migratory species conservation. These gentle giants are not only part of our natural heritage — they are part of our story. Protecting them means protecting the health of the ocean as a whole.

Niue is proud to contribute to the regional vision of Unlocking Blue Pacific Prosperity — demonstrating that even the smallest nations can lead with vision, innovation, and enduring action.

But we cannot do this alone. We need fair, accessible financing. We need political will. And we need partners who value long-term impact over short-term returns.

Let Niue be a demonstration — of what is possible when leadership is grounded in community, science, and culture. Let us all rise to the urgency of this moment

The time is now — to act, to invest, and to protect what protects us.

Fakaaue lahi. Thank you.