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PARTNERSHIP DIALOGUE 5
Increasing economic benefits to
SIDS (Small Island Developing States) & LDCs (Least Developed Countries),
and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

SUMMARY FOR CLOSING PLENARY

Honourable Secretary General, Co-Presidents, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Afternoon!

It is my privilege to present the summary of partnership dialogue No 5 on behalf of co-hairs Grenada and Estonia. Our dialogue focused on promoting partnerships and finding workable solutions for challenges faced by SIDS, LDCs and artisanal fishing communities.

Let me begin by extending our deepest gratitude to Co-Presidents Fiji and Sweden, Secretary-General of the Conference Wu Hongbo, President of the United Nations General Assembly Peter Thompson, and the hardworking staff of the United Nations Secretariat for their exceptional work in organizing this vitally important event, and especially for laying the groundwork for productive partnership dialogues.

Partnership dialogue No 5 addressed two distinct but interrelated targets of SDG14. First, target 14.7 on increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs from the sustainable use of marine resources, and second, target 14.b on providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets.

The dialogue was co-chaired by H.E. Dr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, and H.E. Mr. Marko Pomerants, Minister of the Environment of Estonia. The co-chairs shared observations from their respective national contexts, including on the importance of regional cooperation; and the importance of supporting home-grown capacity and expertise.

We enjoyed an extremely productive discussion under the skillful moderation of Dame Meg Taylor, Pacific Ocean Commissioner and Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. I would also like to extend our gratitude to our four panelists: H.E. Mr. Mohammed Shainee, Minister of Fisheries and Agriculture, Maldives; Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa ‘Utoikamanu, USG of OHRLLS; Ms. Laura Tuck, Vice President for Sustainable Development, World Bank Group; and Mr. Mitchell Lay, Coordinator of the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organizations.

The panelists offered compelling inputs that covered a range of perspectives regarding this complex theme, stressing in particular sustainability aspects of development that prioritizes economic benefits for local communities while preserving the natural resource base. Panelists noted that in all areas of the blue economy, community-based management is critical, as are policies protecting tenure rights for small-scale fishers, emphasizing the importance to include fishing communities in policy making decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. Several panelists pointed to the Nauru Agreement on tuna fisheries, and its Vessel Day Scheme, as a successful example of regional cooperation to maximize economic benefit to the SIDS. The panel also cited the World Bank report, “The Sunken Billions,” which argues in favor of managing annual catch in regions around the world in order to allow fish stocks to regenerate.
Interventions from the floor – a total of 25 statements – reaffirmed many of the themes presented by the panel, and demonstrated wide-ranging partnerships from combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing to promoting early warning systems for natural disasters, and supporting SIDS as they work to conserve and sustainably manage their marine resources. In addition, many partners are dedicating significant resources to addressing vulnerability to climate change.

Other topics covered by voluntary commitments included social responsibility and human rights in fisheries and aquaculture, transitioning to low impact fishing gear, using satellite images for fisheries management, building capacity in WTO sanitary and phytosanitary measures, and others. Some initiatives also aimed to build capacity in implementing the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication. Governments and other stakeholders also discussed a number of innovative alternative financing mechanisms, including a sovereign "blue bond" to raise money from private investors interested in supporting sustainable development.

To sum up, the discussion demonstrated a board commitment to the common goal of sustainable management of marine resources, particularly the Blue Economy agenda. The people of SIDS and LDCs have a long history of stewardship of their marine resources and expertise in sustainable management - this must be respected and supported. However, we also need to reduce pressure on those resources by providing more alternatives and more rewarding livelihoods for the coastal communities of SIDS and LDCs. The participants also underlined that broad partnerships with all stakeholders are a precondition for achieving these goals. In addition, we must also bear in mind that we are talking about a diverse group of countries and there are no one-size-fits-all solutions. Each country faces unique challenges of their own, and therefore local circumstances must also be taken into account.

In his opening remarks, our co-chair, H.E. Dr. Keith Mitchell, Prime Minister of Grenada, quoted an African proverb that says – if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together. This is particularly fitting in light of the challenges faced by SIDS & LDCs, and the landmark international agreements of 2015 that bind the international community in our common goal of transitioning to a more sustainable future. Today, SIDS and LDCs are on the front lines of climate change – for many of them it is a matter of survival. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the vision and unity enshrined in Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement.

Finally, I would like to conclude with extending our gratitude to all participants for their contributions and commitments to support the objectives of this partnership dialogue. It is truly inspiring to see nations from all over the world stepping up and joining forces to help the most vulnerable. We hope that the insights gained from this dialogue will inspire even more new partnerships for speeding up action in these urgent matters. We must take collective action to ensure the sustainable use of the marine environment and its preservation for future generations. There is no time to waste. For the sake of our fellow nations, I hope we can turn the tide. Thank you!