



PACIFIC SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES United Nations Member States

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Statement by

**H.E. Mr. Stuart Beck
Permanent Representative
of Palau to the United Nations**

at the

Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

22 May 2013, New York

Co-chairs,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) represented at the United Nations; namely, Fiji, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country, Palau. I am also speaking for the Pacific Troika on the Open Working Group on SDGs, namely Nauru, Palau, and Papua New Guinea.

Co-chairs,

The PSIDS are pleased to participate in today's interactive exchange of views on food security and nutrition, sustainable agriculture, desertification, land degradation, and drought. We as a group bring a unique perspective to these issues that we hope will help stimulate debate and will be reflected in the Working Group's decisions. For the Pacific SIDS, sustainability is tied inexorably to the health, productivity, and resilience of the oceans. That is why we as a group are championing a resonant, universal, and measurable Sustainable Development Goal on oceans.

Oceans are the common fabric uniting states and continents. They cover two thirds of the Earth's surface. Hundreds of millions of people depend on their resources for income and sustenance.

Island and coastal communities around the world understand the nexus between the marine environment and sustainable development. For the PSIDS, the inter-linkages are axiomatic. The marine environment will stop producing the resources on which we rely without conservation and proper management. We cannot eradicate poverty without the economic benefits of sustainable fisheries. And we cannot achieve our full potential without recognizing the social dimension of oceans as a critical source of work, food, and culture.

Co-chairs,

Fisheries are our daily bread. They are as critical to PSIDS' food security, nutrition, and survival as agriculture is for others. We agree with the OWG's Technical Support Team that the challenges facing agriculture – including fisheries – over the coming decades are complex, and that systems need to become more productive and less wasteful to meet growing demand. In the oceans context, this will mean the pursuit of more sustainable fishing practices and the cultivation of the healthy marine environment needed to support them.

The international community has identified many of the problems and agreed on many of the solutions, but further progress is needed. For instance, states stressed the crucial role of healthy marine ecosystems, sustainable fisheries, and sustainable aquaculture for food security, nutrition, and providing for livelihoods at Rio+20. They also committed to:

- maintain or restore all fish stocks at least to levels that can at least produce maximum sustainable yield;
- eliminate harmful fisheries subsidies, which create incentives for overfishing and other unsustainable fishing practices;
- eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, which deprives countries of their resources. IUU fishing is a particularly pernicious problem in our region that must be stopped.

The SDGs provide us the medium by which we can fulfill these and other commitments to sustainable development.

Co-Chairs

Coastal and small island developing states feel the threats to sustainable development disproportionately. In particular, we face persistent barriers to appropriately monitoring our fish stocks and implementing the management measures needed to preserve our marine environment.

At Rio+20, states committed to identify and mainstream strategies by 2014 to assist developing countries, in particular LDCs and SIDS, in developing their capacity to conserve, sustainably manage, and realize the benefits of sustainable fisheries. SIDS need this assistance to implement and enforce appropriate measures to minimize factors that adversely affect the sustainability of fish stocks and ocean ecosystems and, consequently, put at risk our economies and food security.

Finally, Co-Chairs,

The PSIDS reiterate that the international community must address the ongoing impacts and looming threat of climate change, or progress on all issues of sustainable development will be for naught.

In the oceans context, fish are migrating to colder waters and our coral reefs are being destroyed by ocean acidification, reducing stocks on a global level and also for our local communities. Rising waters in our region have begun to penetrate our aquifers and salinize the ground water on our islands, threatening our traditional staple foods. Its effects can be clearly seen throughout the islands, ranging from the ongoing drought in the Marshall Islands to loss of habitable land in Papua New Guinea.

Climate change is truly a cross-cutting issue. As we move forward in developing our goals, targets, and indicators, it will be our constant companion. It must be taken into account every step of the way.

Thank you.