



Government of Tuvalu

TUVALU  
Statement

Delivered by

The Acting Secretary to Government, Mr Fakavae Taomia

At the Whales in a Changing Ocean

Nukualofa, Tonga, 4-6 April, 2017

*(Check Against Delivery)*

Acting Prime Minister of Tonga

Excellency Ministers from the region

Distinguished members of Academia and researchers, Representatives from the private sector and NGOs

Distinguished Delegates

Friends

I bring Greetings and best wishes from Tuvalu

First, it is with great honour that I acknowledge the kind invitation of the Director of SPREP in this historic international conference on Whales in a Changing Ocean.

Allow me to congratulate His Majesty, the Government and people of Tonga for the declaring all Tongan waters as a whale sanctuary. Let me also extend our sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of Tonga for their warm hospitality in hosting us.

The Ocean has been one the main sources of our livelihoods, identity, traditions in all the Pacific including my country Tuvalu since the creation of our islands. As custodian of the Pacific Ocean it is our duty to continue looking after its health to ensure that it continues to provide for our future generation.

In the last PSIDS PrepCom Conference in March this year in Fiji. Leaders reaffirmed the need to improve Ocean governance through strengthening existing instruments and where necessary, the development of comprehensive frameworks to sustainably manage, conserve and develop our Ocean and its resources across all maritime zones.

The MDGs, SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, Pacific Oceanscape, our Leaders' Ocean declarations in 2015 and 2016 and many others, are principal platforms we could all be proud of. Because they are the fruits of our coming and standing together as a global community. Therefore It is very important in this conference that we acknowledge the current regional efforts to protect and minimize risks on the welfare of whales from fishing practices.

However, Tuvalu would like to emphasise that it is important that we maintain the context and continue the momentum of these platforms in our deliberations this week.

In Tuvalu, Oceans and seas is one of the twelve prominent strategic areas in our Te Kakeega III (National Strategy for Sustainable Development) where the goal is to conserve, oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. Tuvalu has committed to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine resources, consistent with international law, based on the best scientific evidence. Furthermore under our TKIII we are committed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources by implementing international laws as in UNCLOS.

I am glad to inform that Tuvalu has implemented new legislation focusing on conservation and management measure from WCPFC and PNA for the protection of whale sharks from purse seine fishing operations by prohibiting purse seine vessels fishing in our EEZ from conducting sets on or around whale

sharks through the third arrangement implementing the PNA setting forth additional terms and conditions of access to the fisheries zones of the parties.

Additionally there is also Conservation and Management Measure to address impact of purse seine fishing activity on cetaceans (marine mammals). This CMM prohibit states flagged vessels from setting a purse seine net on a school of tuna associated with a cetacean in the high seas and exclusive economic zones of the Convention Area, if the animal is sighted prior to commencement of the set. This came into force since 2013 but we have yet to legislate it in our own national legislations.

Tuvalu in addressing the issues on Oceans Tuvalu has consistently called for :

- **a global ban on use of micro-beads and micro plastics.** As well as encourage the development of an international agreement for environment and safety standards for all offshore drilling and mining on or in the continental shelf.
- **the international community at large to commit to establishing marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.** Work is already under way under the auspices of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to develop an International Legally Binding Agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond the national jurisdiction. Within these discussions there has been a variety of views with respect to the establishment of marine protected areas, particularly over what marine protected areas should cover. From our perspective they should be clearly defined areas to achieve the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services and other cultural values.
- **On Target 14.4, we call on all nations to ratify the legally binding Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (PSMA).** The PSMA Agreement has yet to enter into force as there are insufficient ratifications (needs 25 States). It is an important Agreement to monitor and report on IUU fishing. We in the Pacific are the custodians of a huge area of ocean which is heavily fished by distant water fishing fleets. Some of these fleets are responsible, others are not. The PSMA Agreement will go a long way to ensure that we can properly account for the fish that our taken out of our region.
- **We should also call on all coastal nations to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all sea mounts within the Exclusive Economic Zones, and to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all sea mounts in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.** As some of you know, deep sea bed trawling is a very destructive form of fishing. It drags large nets across the ocean floor taking everything along its way.

Sea mounts are important areas of biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management. All deep sea bed trawling should be eliminated from these areas both within areas of national jurisdiction and beyond. To ensure that this ban is enforced, assistance will need to be provided to SIDS and LDCs to enforce this ban.

Climate Change is the greatest threat and the challenge to the atoll nations like Tuvalu. At the international level the Government of Tuvalu has launched two key initiatives at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul last year. The first was a call for a Pacific Island Climate Change Insurance Facility. This is urgently needed as the Pacific has been badly hit by cyclones in recent years. We need a predictable source of funding to help us rebuild after the impacts of climate change. This should help us in the addressing the impacts of climate change on our ocean resources (impacts on fisheries, livelihoods of ocean mammals etc). SPREP and UNDP are working together with Tuvalu in initiating a dialogue with regional countries, partners and private sector on this insurance facility.

The other initiative was a call for a UN General Assembly resolution to commence negotiations of a legal agreement to give protection to people displaced by the impacts of climate change. It is a well known fact that millions of people each year are displaced by the impacts of weather events. Climate change is a key factor in this growing human tragedy. People displaced by climate change are not defined as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention and as a consequence fall through the cracks when it comes to legal protection.

These initiatives will all contribute to our efforts towards addressing the impacts of climate change and the survival of our people including our oceans and its resources, including whales.

## Conclusion

Tuvalu looks forward to the deliberations where this conference will consider the whole of Ocean approach into the sustainable management of oceanic resources including whales and other marine resources.

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