

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM STATEMENT

INTERVENTION DE HEREMOANA MAAMAATUAIAHUTAPU

Interactive dialogue 5 : Making fisheries sustainable and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets

Mardi 17 juin 2022

Co-Chairs,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum Member countries and territories.

At the outset, I want to congratulate, Norway and Cabo Verde on their role as Co-Chairs of this Interactive Dialogue. I also would like to thank all the panellist for their informative presentation.

Our fisheries resources are vital to the livelihoods of the Pacific people and the world. Our region supplies more than half of the tuna needs of the Planet. The fisheries resource offers many opportunities for our people, through revenue generation, employment opportunities, and importantly food security.

It is therefore critical that we look after this valuable resource from the growing number of threats such as climate change, habitat destruction, marine pollution to name a few.

Co-Chairs,

The preservation of fisheries habitat is critical if fish and marine organisms are to survive. The Pacific is home to 25% of the world's corals. Investment in holistic approaches to ecosystem management and increasing capacity of the Pacific to manage reefs are vital for the future of Pacific Islands.

An ecosystem-based approach is crucial for coastal fishery management. As a global community, we must work towards increased investments and research in understanding climate change, pollution and harvesting rate impacts on the habitats and ecosystems supporting important fisheries in the region.



Co-Chairs,

The fisheries sector has changed significantly over the past decade, requiring further action based on science, innovation, and the strengthening of the science-policy interface. We call for greater investment and support to blue food systems. In the Pacific, we also look forward to the considered inclusion of traditional knowledge and observations in the evidence-based management of fisheries in the region.

Co-Chairs,

As the Pacific, we welcome the WTO fisheries subsidies agreement adopted two weeks ago on 17 June at the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference or MC12. We note that this is a partial outcome addressing two forms of harmful subsidies namely subsidies to IUU fishing and overfished stocks that bring us closer towards realizing target 14 dot 6. However, we further note that work will continue in WTO to address subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing, as well as appropriate and effective special differential treatment for developing countries and least developed countries (LDCs) and to fully realizing SDG 14.6 by MC13.

Co-Chairs,

Fisheries and aquaculture products remain among the most traded food commodities globally. About 35–38 per cent of total fisheries and aquaculture production is exported, valued at \$173 billion annually.

The majority of the population in our islands across the Pacific live along the coast. During Covid period, many of the informal sector workers who lost their jobs reverted to their villages and relied on marine life for the sustenance to cushion for their families. These coastal populations include mostly Indigenous Population and Local Communities (IPLCs) who also are often small-scale fisheries.

But these communities are often exploited due to their rich and convenient marine resources, they are often forced to sell at undervalued prices, so companies can maximize on profits for their export sales to lucrative markets overseas. We must enhance access to financial services, including loans and insurance.

Co-Chairs,

We urgently need a paradigm shift from the current way we think, do our business and our developments, to one that put ecosystems and peoples at the centre. We must accelerate innovations and actions to ensures that we all live and pursue our future in peace and harmony with our ecosystems.



In my national capacity,

I would like to highlight two points.

Firstly, French Polynesia has a growing concern about the problem of drifting FADs. Purse seine fishing and drifting FADs have been always prohibited in our EEZ, but the inhabitants of our islands see an increasing number of drifting FADs dropped in international waters, stranded on their reefs. In addition to the damage caused to corals, populations have to manage these wastes made up of plastics, electronics and batteries, that cannot be processed locally and must be sent abroad. For example, the last cleaning campaign on the atoll of Rangiroa recover more than 280 beached FADs and cost nearly 120,000 Euros.

It is therefore essential that Member States of Tuna Commissions raise this problem in Regional Fishing Organizations to control the number of drifting FADs and above all to make their recovery compulsory.

The second subject concerns the management of reef and lagoon resources. While we recognize that on a global scale, the ambitious objective of protecting 30% of spaces by 2030 is commendable and relevant, we hope that it will not distract efforts on the remaining 70%.

Therefore, we invite the international community to better recognize and promote what the Convention on Biological Diversity has called Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECM). French Polynesia indeed defends a vision of man in the midst of his environment and the management of resources by local communities, yet we note that only Marine Protected Areas seem to be mainly promoted today. However, the balance between Man and Ecosystems will be the key to our collective success. This type of conservation and management tool must be promoted and made eligible for funding, in particular to increase capacity building in the community level, for the collection of data, scientific assessments and effectiveness monitoring of management measures.

I thank you

SERVICE DE LA COMMUNICATION
