

POHNPEI OCEAN STATEMENT: A COURSE TO SUSTAINABILITY

We, the Heads of State and Government and representatives of States and Governments of the Pacific Island Forum, gathered in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia on 11 September 2016:

1. Recognise the inseparable link between our, ocean, seas and Pacific island peoples: their values, traditional practices and spiritual connections. The invaluable methods and principles passed down from our fore bearers are key to a sustainable future for our ocean. We are custodians of some of the world's richest biodiversity and marine resources and recognise that this natural endowment is our greatest asset that must be sustainably managed for the benefit of our present and future generations. A shared Ocean means a shared responsibility and shared benefits for our environment, our economies and our communities. We also acknowledge that the ocean brings unity in a diverse and dynamically evolving world. Therefore as guardians of the largest portion of the Pacific Ocean, our leadership matters.
2. Recognise that the ocean is the basis of livelihoods for Pacific peoples and is also susceptible to the effects of climate change. In this regard, we call for early action by all countries to ratify and implement the Paris Agreement and provide adequate and simplified access to finance for adaptation and mitigation by Pacific Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) to address the impacts of sea level rise and climate change. .
3. Reaffirm our call to action under the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the 2014 Palau Declaration: "The Ocean: Life and Future" to chart a course to sustainability and its support of the 'pre- cautionary principle'. We also reaffirm the 2002 Pacific Islands Regional Ocean Policy and the 2010 Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape: "Our Sea of Islands, Our Livelihoods, Our Oceania" and the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific as our guiding regional Ocean policy instruments and reaffirm our commitment to implementing the "Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries" to ensure our ocean and its resources are managed sustainably.
4. Support the decisions taken by the Leaders of Smaller Island States in June 2016 and recognise the importance of sustaining and preserving our coral reefs to the health and well-being of our most vulnerable communities. We encourage investments in science and research in order to better understand the capacity of our Ocean to provide for our future, and we underscore the unique and particular vulnerabilities of Pacific SIDS in managing these natural assets, including the need to understand and build resilience to ocean acidification.
5. Welcome the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a universal, overarching plan for eradicating poverty, fighting inequalities, building peaceful, inclusive, and resilient societies, and securing the future of the planet and the wellbeing of future generations.
6. Commit to continue the strong leadership as demonstrated by the Pacific region in calling for urgent action on oceans which led to the adoption of SDG14 and its many targets, including: the prevention and reduction of marine pollution of all kinds; sustainable management and protection of marine and coastal ecosystems; minimise and address the impacts of ocean acidification; conservation of marine areas, sustainable management of fisheries and the elimination of fisheries subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and

unregulated fishing; and increasing economic benefits for all from the ocean including fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

7. Underscore the need for meaningful implementation of SDG14 commitments, in particular, genuine and durable “partnerships for action”, as articulated in the SAMOA Pathway, to accelerate the realisation of our regional and national commitments towards our common global vision and recognise this should be country-led and country-driven.

8. Call on the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, regional and sub-regional organisations and commissions and partners of the Pacific Ocean Alliance, based on their individual mandates competencies and comparative advantages, to provide the necessary technical, financial and administrative support to countries’ implementation of SDG14.

9. We note the opportunity presented by the *United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development*, in June 2017. We reaffirm the leadership, advocacy and facilitative role of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner under the region’s Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, to coordinate with Forum Member States and partners in the Pacific Ocean Alliance, Pacific regional engagement, technical support and initiatives for the UN Conference.

10. Reflect on the significant international developments over the past year on oceans and urge a timely and comprehensive conclusion to the Preparatory Committee process established to make substantive recommendations to the United Nations General Assembly on the elements of a draft text of an international legally binding instrument, under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. We support the convening of a time-bound intergovernmental conference no later than during the seventy-third session of the United Nations General Assembly.

11. Commit to this shared vision for a secure future for our people based on the sustainable development, management and conservation of our Ocean and its resources. To ensure that no one is left behind, we must embrace transformative change and action now.