



## **Statement by the Government of the Cook Islands for the first meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States**

Kia orana,

The Cook Islands wishes to join others in congratulating the Bureau members on their appointments and looks forward to working under the joint-leadership of the two Co-Chairs in advancing our agenda.

Firstly, the Cook Islands wishes to associate itself with the statements previously made by Nauru on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), and Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Pacific small islands developing states (PSIDS).

Secondly, the Cook Islands would like to further add its support to the statement made yesterday by the distinguished delegate of Mauritius in advancing the concept of 'Large Ocean States', in emphasising the value of our waters and the resources contained within them, whilst at the same time not diminishing the particular and unique threats and challenges posed to us as small island developing states, chief amongst these being climate change.

With climate change, SIDS are particularly susceptible to its most extreme impacts by virtue of our geography and it is generally recognised that SIDS bear much of the brunt of the effects of climate change and the resulting development challenges. However, our specific vulnerability could be perceived as an opportunity, especially in this year. By creating constructive partnerships to meet these development challenges, SIDS, by way of our small size and our inherent dynamic nature, can be leaders and provide a model for larger countries if we can successfully address these development challenges.

We also acknowledge the value in the suggestion made yesterday by the distinguished delegate of the United States, in calling for some organisation of our work into particular key areas, which has the advantage of enabling us to more accurately measure success in our efforts to meet specific development outcomes. Two such areas of major importance and focus in the Cook Islands development efforts are renewable energy and the sustainable development of our ocean resources, in particular of highly migratory fisheries.

We would add our voice to others in stating the need to support and complement the efforts being made in these areas by SIDS and their supporting agencies at the regional and sub-regional levels in this respect. At the national level, our National Sustainable Development planning process articulates the Cook Islands aspirations, and links assistance and support to development outcomes that are measurable and transparent. With this in

mind, we want to emphasise that in moving forward, it is crucial that in fostering development partnerships, that national systems are used as far as possible, as this encourages SIDS to develop robust systems that are transparent, accountable, and foster confidence on the part of citizens in their official processes, procedures and systems.

The Cook Islands also strongly believes that the development of SIDS will be enhanced if we continue to work in partnership with all our stakeholders which includes the private sector, civil society, and our community, village and tribal groups. Indeed, development in SIDS like the Cook Islands - with the unique problems and challenges we face specifically isolation and lack of economies of scale, means we need to develop smarter and more innovative solutions, specific to our own circumstances.

Lastly, the Cook Islands looks forward to joining the rest of the world in Samoa at the SIDS Conference to help us progress and meet the challenges of the development of SIDS as we move forward.