



**STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR PETER THOMSON AT THE SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS  
ON FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW**

UN SECRETARIAT BUILDING, CONFERENCE ROOM 4, NEW YORK, 20 MAY 2015

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Distinguished Co-Facilitators,

Allow me firstly to thank you for your steadfast leadership throughout this long process. Thank you also for the very useful discussion paper that was provided to guide our deliberations this week.

The Fiji delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by South Africa on behalf of G77 and China, by Maldives on behalf of AOSIS, and by Tonga on behalf of PSIDS.

Co-Facilitators, as numerous delegations have stated during these negotiations, a comprehensive regime of robust monitoring and accountability will be key to the success of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. We also join others in emphasizing the central role of the High Level Political Forum, as mandated through resolution 67/290, in the Development Agenda's follow-up and review process.

Co-Facilitators, since the Fiji delegation is speaking late in this week's deliberations, we will restrict our statement to just one aspect of follow-up and review, this being the accountability mechanism for ensuring the integrity of delivery of SDG14, the Sustainable Development Goal pertaining to the conservation and sustainable use of the resources of oceans and seas. You will recall that the Pacific Small Islands Developing States Chair, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga, called your attention to this matter in his group statement on Monday. As with most of the small island developing States of the planet, Fiji has an existential stake in ensuring the integrity of SDG14's delivery.

It is pertinent at this juncture, to refer to a very significant phrase appearing in your discussion paper. In Annex 1 of the paper there is a bullet point under "Thematic Reviews" that refers to finding homes for "orphan" SDGs. The analogy is clear, the majority of SDGs have diligent parents who will be dedicated to the fostering to fruition of the SDGs for which they have a special responsibility - for example the World Health Assembly for SDG3 relating to healthy lives, UNESCO for SDG4 on inclusive and equitable education, and so on.

But what of the "Oceans SDG"? It is precisely because SDG14 had the potential of being an orphan, that in the first months of 2015 we began to put in place special measures to protect the goal's integrity. By the beginning of this year, it had become clear that the SDG14 would be born

this September and that, all being well, we could pin our hopes on it to guide the world towards a reversal of the cycle of decline of the oceans and seas by 2030. Special measures were required because it cannot be denied that all of us have been either unwitting or reluctant witnesses to this cycle of maritime decline in our lifetimes.

So the question we asked ourselves at the beginning of this year was how can we be sure that SDG14 will succeed? How can we nourish this prodigious child, so that it will indeed be the force that leads us to the day in 2030, when we can say it was largely because of its enlightened guidance that we saved significant life in the oceans and seas of this world; because of this SDG that we controlled ocean acidification, illegal fishing, the health of maritime ecosystems and marine pollution; and because of it that our children and grandchildren will continue to live in a world in which fish and shellfish still flourish in the wild?

Or are we, Co-facilitators, about to give birth to a pile of beautiful words, that because of the usual behavioral tendencies and prevailing mind-sets of humanity, will be a failure as deep as the Mariana Trench? Is SDG14 fated to do little more than preside over the continuation of the cycle of the decline of oceans and seas, to the inevitable and unspeakable conclusion of the existing decline?

For the majority of small island developing States, and we would hope for the majority of all Member States, the demise of significant life in the oceans would be an unacceptable outcome of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is for this reason, to resolutely guard against such awful outcome, that we have set about working on a follow-up and review mechanism for SDG14 that will protect the integrity of the goal's delivery. We are putting together a mechanism through which we will hold ourselves, in our many manifestations of governments, agencies, businesses and knowledge community, accountable to ourselves; a process by which we will ensure that when we approach the seminal year of 2030, we will know that our dogged efforts have succeeded, and that the "Oceans SDG" has indeed reversed the current cycle of maritime decline.

The mechanism, Co-facilitators, is the proposed Triennial Global Oceans & Seas Summit process. While we have been gathering here in the Intergovernmental Negotiations this week, experts have been at work crafting a draft GA resolution for initial presentation to Member States at a side-event late next month. The aim is to bring this draft resolution, mandating the Oceans Summit process, to the General Assembly under an existing Sustainable Development agenda item in the last quarter of 2015.

With the General Assembly mandate secured, work will then begin in earnest towards the holding of the first of the five Oceans Summits in mid-2017, with the following four summits to be held in 2020, 2023, 2026 and 2029 respectively. These summits will focus entirely on the accountability of SDG14, and thereby on the central task of safeguarding the health of our oceans and seas.

If you break SDG14 down into relevant clusters, there are four or five such clusters relating to marine pollution, fisheries management, climate change effects, marine and coastal ecosystems, and oceans governance. It is proposed that each summit will cover five days, the first three days of which will involve interaction within these clusters by representatives of governments, the international agencies, the knowledge community, business and CSOs. We are proposing to make these summits as open and inclusive as logistically possible, because we recognize that in the fight to save significant life in the oceans and seas, we must harness all the energy, knowledge, resources and ideas that humanity can muster.

During the first three days of each summit, under the spotlight of SDG14, reports will be presented on the programmes being undertaken by the large number of international agencies responsible for oceans and seas. Dialogue will then identify where gaps exist, where we are not progressing steadily enough, where more needs to be done, where partnerships are required and how action alliances must be formed immediately to get the job done. The dialogue will be inclusive and science-based, and accountability will be approached as a universal responsibility.

The outcomes of these cluster deliberations will then be presented at the two-day Heads of Government segment of the Summit, with the outcome of the Summit being a benchmark as to where the global community sits on the implementation of SDG14. We are confident that by bringing together all the relevant actors, through this triennial benchmarking procedure we will be able to ensure that step by step over the fifteen years, all possible progress will be achieved. By collectively holding ourselves to account every three years of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, we will have a mechanism through which we will faithfully deliver the outcomes the "Oceans Goal" that are desired by us all.

The outcomes of each summit will be duly reported back to the High-level Political Forum in its subsequent sitting, in accordance with GA resolution 67/290, thereby fulfilling the responsibility of the oceans community for SDG14 and the overall follow-up and review of progress of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Co-facilitators,

In conclusion, given that the HLPF is mandated to meet for only eight days per year, devolving the follow-up and review functions of each of the Sustainable Development Goals to their relevant global constituent bodies, or "parent" bodies to refer the earlier "orphan" analogy, will logically enhance the workload and quality of the HLPF's coverage of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

In light of that conclusion, we make a closing point, which is that the timing of HLPF's consideration of specific SDGs should be rationally coordinated with the reporting cycle of the parent bodies. In the case of SDG14, since the first of the Triennial Global Ocean & Seas Summits will be held in 2017, the optimal time for its findings to be presented to the HLPF

would be 2018. In the same vein, UN Habitat's holding of Habitat 111 in Quito in 2016, might make 2017 the best time for HLPF to consider SDG11 on sustainable human settlements.

If such rationalization of HLPF's framework is not possible, then the Fiji delegation agrees with those others who have advised you that the annual HLPF themes should be based on clusters of the three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental. We agree that such clustering would ensure a balanced consideration of the Development Agenda's three dimensions of sustainable development, as opposed to the HLPF basing its annual work on the numerical order of the seventeen goals.

I thank you, Co-facilitators, for your attention to this statement.