

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Statement by

HE Jim McLay

Permanent Representative

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

On behalf of

PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM MEMBERS

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum members represented at the United Nations.

Our region is uniquely dependent on its ocean; for Pacific Island countries, their ocean is their lifeblood. Our ocean underpins livelihoods, food security, and economic development. And it was ever thus: Pacific peoples were navigating their ocean – the world's largest – at a time when others were still confined to their coastal waters.

For all those reasons, we say that oceans issues must be a priority at Rio. For those who call the Pacific "home", the "green" economy is in fact a "blue" economy. For Pacific countries, sustainable development cannot be separated from the health of our oceans – sustainable development does not stand apart from oceans management and ocean conservation.

Of course, oceans and their benefits stretch far beyond the Pacific. Oceans cover 70 percent of our earth. World fisheries support 170 million jobs and more than 1.5 billion people rely on marine resources for their protein intake. Even those who live far from the sea are affected by the state of the oceans, because they play a critical role in the global climate system and in connecting world trade. And oceans also provide valuable amenity and recreation for people of every country. For many people, no matter where they live, a beach or a coral reef is the classic symbol of paradise. All of us benefit from maintaining our oceans - and building a blue economy ultimately benefits all countries. And yet the state of this important life sustaining resource is threatened by pollution, overfishing, and climate change. No conference on sustainable development will be successful if it does not address those challenges.

And so it was that, at the 42nd Pacific Islands Forum held in Auckland, New Zealand, in September 2011, Leaders reiterated the critical importance of ensuring the sustainable development, management, and conservation of our ocean, noting the region's unique dependency on the Pacific as the basis for their livelihoods, food security, and economic development. We have repeated those calls in our submission. They are really important to those of us who live in and are sustained by the Pacific; but they are also relevant to those who live well beyond the Pacific, particularly for small island developing states which face the same issues – the same unique and particular vulnerabilities.

We highlight a number of particular areas in the context of this meeting. It will be vital for members of the Pacific Islands Forum that the significance of protecting the health of our oceans for sustainable development is recognised and operationalised through Rio+20. The health of the oceans is a global development issue.

We urge the international community to work towards integrated oceans management, using the *Pacific Oceanscape* as a model; and we look for specific outcomes addressing:

- realisation of relevant international goals such as establishment of the global network of marine protected areas, as agreed at Rio+10;

- actions that target threats to the ocean environment, including from acidification, pollution, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- the conservation and sustainable management of marine eco-systems and resources; and
- arrangements that ensure that small island developing states enjoy a greater share of the benefits derived from the conservation and sustainable management of ocean resources.

These points were also recognised in the joint statement by Forum Leaders and the United Nations Secretary General on 7 September 2011, which called for “Blue Economy” issues to figure prominently at Rio+20.

The range of issues that will confront us as we work our way towards Rio are daunting, but we are encouraged by the growing recognition of the crucial importance of the sustainable development and protection of our oceans. If the advancement of the original Rio goals has been uneven, it has been particularly so in relation to those oceans. We urge the international community to deliver on past commitments and to seize the opportunity to provide a path forward on oceans, recognising their crucial contribution, not just to island states, but also to global sustainable development.

Forum members also wish see the Rio+20 outcome document address other areas that were highlighted in this year’s Forum Communiqué as key to unleashing the productive potential needed for sustainable development. These include:

- fostering an environment that supports increased investment, productive activity and a strengthened private sector, all of which can generate income and employment, particularly in fisheries, agriculture and tourism;
- conserving and managing the fragile island ecosystems that underpin sustainable development and food and water security;
- improving energy security, through greater efficiency measures and the promotion of clean and affordable energy, including renewable energy; and
- investing in improved infrastructure.

Forum members place great importance on a successful outcome at Rio, so we will engage constructively in the discussions over the coming months. Our objective will be to deliver on the priorities identified by Forum Leaders just over two months ago; and we undertake to work with other Member States to achieve those outcomes.