



**Statement by
H.E. Mr. Max Hufanen Rai
Permanent Representative and Ambassador
of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations**

**at the
Preparatory Meeting of 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 - Elements for a Call to Action**

New York, 16 February 2017

"Check against delivery"

Distinguished Co-Facilitators,

My delegation commends you for the constructive leadership and transparent manner in guiding our work thus far in this important process and you have our full trust and confidence.

As an island and archipelagic state with over 600 islands and a partner who had sown the seeds of SDG 14, Papua New Guinea's commitment to its successful attainment is undiminished and therefore the Oceans Conference and its preparatory process are pivotal.

Co-Facilitators,

The resources of the oceans and seas serve as the umbilical cord that nourishes humanity's survival. However, the tragedy of the Commons as reflected in the 2015 First World Oceans Assessment clearly demonstrates mankind's abuse, carelessness and greed resulting in the declining health, productivity and resilience of our shared oceans and seas. This is indeed worrisome.

As custodians of the oceans and seas, it is high time for our collective duty and responsibility to be taken seriously so as to ensure that we must now effectively take the concrete measures necessary to conserve and sustainably uses these important assets without compromising the needs of the future generation.

The clarion call being made in this process is that we must now harness this opportunity to deliver on the opportunities and promises it holds not only for SDG 14 but also for the 2030 Agenda as an integrated whole.

Co-Facilitators,

On the possible elements of the Call to Action, my delegation associates with the remarks, in this context, made by the respective Chairs of the Pacific SIDS (Nauru), the Pacific Islands Forum (The Federated States of Micronesia), AOSIS (Maldives) and G77 and China (Ecuador). In my national capacity, I would offer the following additional proposals.

First, whilst respectful of the modalities resolution emphasis on the Call to Action to be succinct and concise, we believe this also means being robust, practical, implementable and forward-looking. It must not be restating the business as usual rhetoric. We need to have a paradigm shift and think outside of the box. The actions we agree must meaningfully deliver the impact necessary to halt the decline of the health of the oceans and seas and that they are doable and can be sustained over a period of time.

Second, whilst recognizing that the constitution of the oceans, UNCLOS, must remain the central plank for the actions to be taken at all levels, we must also ensure that regional and national arrangements related to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and seas consistent with UNCLOS needs to be respected and supported rather than undermined.

Third, no one single country or entity could restore the health of the oceans singularly. But of primacy is the importance of multistakeholder partnership that is inclusive, transparent and accountable. This needs to underpin the core elements of the Call to Action and could be a real game changer in the rescue of the oceans and seas predicament. Complementing this is the Means of Implementation, including financing, capacity building and marine technology transfer.

Fourth, a strong call for enhanced sustainable fishing is imperative, including to ending IUU fishing, eliminate destructive fishing practices and tackle overfishing at all levels by addressing their root causes. Additional measures to halting unsustainable fishing practices could also include:

- (a) Reinvigorating and implementing national legislation including increased penalties against all unsustainable fishing practices, as an enforcement and compliance tool; and
- (b) The promotion of vessel monitoring scheme and limiting the number of days and catches for registered industrial fishing vessels, based on science with transparent and verifiable measures on the total number of fish caught and landed, including traceability of catches in the supply chain; and
- (c) Halting all transshipment of catches out at sea and instead have this brought onshore for inspection and verification.

Fifth, the importance and urgency of addressing marine pollution both from land and marine based sources cannot be overstated. We are encouraged by the laudable leadership already shown by those countries with domestic legislation banning plastics and micro-plastics for biodegradable substitutes as a possible solution to addressing the concerns over the oceans and seas been infested by plastics and the harm they do to marine life and environment. This highlights that it is doable and needs to be encouraged globally.

We also believe advocacy for preventive measures to deter marine pollution instead of reacting to problems created is essential. Promoting awareness in the formal education system about the SDGs and its Targets, including SDG 14 Target on marine pollution, could teach the young generation to grow up to be environmental warriors that protect it from harmful activities.

A possible preventive measure to protect the health of the oceans and seas, for instance, could be a ban on the transportation of hazardous materials, particularly nuclear waste, over oceans and seas.

Co-Facilitators,

The health of marine and coastal ecosystem and their management, protection and conservation is critical for coastal states and must be underscored in the Call to Action. This must involve all stakeholders including particularly local communities taking ownership and leadership for the protection and sustainable use of their marine resources and environment.

We would further suggest that coastal states on a voluntary and periodic basis assess and take stock of the state of the national marine and coastal ecosystem to identify critical concerns and propose measures to address them. They need to be capacitated financially, institutionally and human resource wise to take on this work and should be supported by the UN system and other global and regional development partners.

The call to action must also address measures to deal with the increasing concerns of ocean acidification and its links with climate change. Synergising Paris Agreement work relating to ocean acidification with the 2030 Agenda with respect to SDGs 13 and 14 implementation is necessary.

This should include promoting and supporting renewable energy that is environmentally friendly, affordable and easily accessible for SIDS and other developing countries, that reduces reliance on fossil fuel and other high carbon emission sources.

Co-Facilitators,

We strongly support increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs and providing access for small-scale artisanal fishers to marine resources and markets in the Call to Action.

In this regard, fostering policies and providing conducive environment that promotes informal sector micro enterprises for artisanal fishers in SIDS and LDCs, where the majority of national stakeholders are located, is vital for indigenous and other local entrepreneurs to benefit from their natural resources.

Increasing economic benefits to SIDS and LDCs could also be derived from joint venture fishing schemes between national companies and foreign enterprises under an equitable and fair contractual arrangement that is respected.

Also establishing fish processing facilities in-country in SIDS and LDCs need to needs to encouragedto generate employment and add value to exports.

In closing, capacity building for SIDS and LDCs related to marine science and technology knowledge, research and transfer remain essential and needs to be reflected in the call to action.

This could include fostering regular academic exchanges on marine science between educational institutions amongst countries including on marine scientific research to build capacity and technical knowledge as well as technical support to establish and strengthen institutional arrangements such as an integrated national oceans office and regular review to ensure its effectiveness.

Finally, my delegation would like to applaud and thank the countries including Australia and Japan and others who have generously contributed to the Voluntary Trust Fund to enable developing countries, including SIDS and LDCs participation in the UN Oceans Conference.

Thank you.