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STATEMENT TO UN OCEAN CONFERENCE PREPARATORY MEETING, ALSO ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC (FIJI) AND THE UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN (NORWAY)

Thank you Mr. Co-Facilitator, and good afternoon, excellencies and delegates.

I represent the scientific community in the form of a bi-regional, European Union-funded research consortium studying the human dimensions of climate change and ocean-based livelihoods in the Pacific Islands. Our members are universities in Norway, the UK, France, the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and eleven additional Pacific SIDS that are Great Ocean States. The development of enduring partnerships is a major priority for us in the research community. And as noted this morning by the ambassador of Tuvalu, research consortiums that straddle the world can ensure that the knowledge of those who live in and with the ocean are integrated into the pursuit of SDG14 and other goals.

Those whose livelihoods depend on the ocean know much about it, which informs broader partnership dialogues as exemplified by the mutual commitment to partnership by my own ocean-oriented institution the University of Bergen, Norway, and the regional, equally ocean-focused University of the South Pacific. As a professor of Pacific Studies at both universities I travel back and forth and see how ocean-related research in Norway and Fiji works along different scales and parameters, but have transfer potentials in both directions.

Although food security as mentioned in the Background Note is not in the seven Themes, I suggest the Call for Action elaborate on our reliance on seafood for growing populations. Sufficient land-based food production faces many challenges, which urges us to utilize coastal and oceanic resources more sustainably. This has always been a fact of life for those

who live on small islands in the Pacific. Since there is little scope for increase in global fisheries, our focus must be on growing and harvesting ocean resources at lower levels of the food chain. And climate change affects ocean ecosystems and fisheries differently in the Arctic and the tropics.

In these research fields scientists of all vocations will benefit through bi-directional flows of knowledge between regions as far apart as the Pacific and Europe – and science for attainment of SDG14 becomes a dialogue in itself.

Thank you for your time.