

Ocean Conference, 5-9 June 2017

Partnership dialogue 2: Managing, protecting, conserving and restoring marine and coastal ecosystems

Statement by Dr. Colin Tukuitonga, Director General, The Pacific Community

Madam Chair, Distinguished representatives and delegates

As it has been highlighted, Pacific wellbeing and development strongly depends on coastal and marine ecosystems. The region relies on the ocean as a vital source of sustenance, transport, commerce, economic growth, cultural heritage and inspiration.

The Pacific is already a world leader in sustainable marine management. Managed areas and protected sanctuaries are being increasingly set up. And I salute here the efforts of the Pacific Islands states committed to increasing their ambition, as underscored by the opening statement of co-chair HE President of Palau and eloquent and forceful interventions of HE President of French Polynesia, PM of the Cook Islands, PM of Samoa and Minister of Tonga. Madam Chair, you will agree with me that the Pacific is doing more than its share!

The Pacific Community or SPC as it is known, as the prime scientific and technical regional development organisation of the Pacific, is advocating for improved ocean intelligence: at a time when threats upon the ocean are so prominent, more ocean data and better communication of ocean science is required for informed decision-making and resilient development. The Pacific Community is committed to furthering its work to build the knowledge and equip Pacific island states with the necessary information, in particular in areas of fisheries, ocean status, and ocean climate monitoring.

The Pacific Community encourages the development of marine scientific research and information as a common good; noting that data collection, access and sharing also needs to be supported by the transfer of knowledge and skills as provided for under UNCLOS, and the provision of adequate funding for long term monitoring.

Let me highlight that SPC maintains the Pacific Ocean Portal, a user friendly access point for the display of ocean information, maps and graphs, providing regional to country level information on sea surface and subsurface temperatures, salinity, current, wave, sea level and more. We invite all technical and development agencies to become active partners and contributors to the Pacific Ocean Portal.

For our Pacific member countries to seize development opportunities, for example in the areas of tourism or fisheries, it requires a healthy ocean environment. This is enshrined in such regional sectoral strategies as the New Song for coastal fisheries or the Pacific Energy roadmap which we helped endorse. We at SPC are committed to providing the best technical, legal and scientific advice, to developing national legal and policy instruments in the sectors, and building capacities, so that Pacific Island Countries and Territories are able to make informed decisions. For example, In recognition of the importance of ocean resources to our

region, SPC has carried out studies on the potential impacts of Deep Sea Mining on fishery resources of Pacific Island states.

Finally, I wish to emphasize the importance of maritime boundaries, given the impact of climate change and sea level rise on the small island states. Pacific states have made this a priority. SPC has been providing technical advice to member states to define their baselines and maritime boundaries and also complete the process of defending their submissions on the extended continental shelf claims before the UN. Additional support is required to assist remaining countries in this important process.

Let me conclude by underscoring the necessary partnership between development and protection organisation. In areas of development interest to our member countries, -fisheries, mining, tourism-, we at SPC are committed to partnering with conservation organisations and pursue efforts to ensure sustainability of the development options selected.