

SPREP Environment Ministers and High-Level Representatives Talanoa Communiqué 2019

The Twenty-ninth SPREP Meeting Environment Ministers' High-Level Talanoa was held on 6 September 2019 in Apia, Samoa. The Talanoa was attended by Environment Ministers and High-Level Representatives of American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America, and Wallis and Futuna.

Ministers and High-Level Representatives expressed their appreciation to the Government and the People of Samoa for the warm and generous hospitality extended to all delegations. Appreciation was further extended to the Secretariat for its efforts in organising a successful meeting.

The Ministers and High-Level Representatives¹:

Climate change

1. **Recall** the Boe Declaration on Regional Security, in which Pacific Islands Forum Leaders reaffirmed that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific, and the joint commitment to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement;
2. **Further recall** the urgency of global action on climate change as underlined by 2019 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders in the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now (Kainaki II declaration), **noting** with concern the impacts of natural disasters exacerbated by climate change are threatening our social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being and increasing the burden and risk of our security;
3. **Note** the need to pursue, bold and innovative regional solutions to climate change, including ecosystem-based solutions, recognising that our futures, as well as the actions we choose to take, are interconnected;
4. **Note** with grave concern that global greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, reaching record levels, and based on current trends, without urgent action, global average temperatures above pre-industrial levels will exceed 1.5°C by as early as 2030 and will reach 3°C or more by the end of this century, which would cause devastating impacts on Pacific countries, territories and communities;
5. **Recognise** the particular vulnerabilities of atoll nations to climate change impacts, acknowledging their efforts to collaborate in the identification of adaptation strategies through the Atoll Adaptation Dialogues between Republic of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu and the Maldives;
6. **Reiterate** the need to take into account the imperatives of a just transition of the work force and creation of decent work and quality jobs for all people, especially those most vulnerable, as we collectively move towards a low-emissions future, managing the impacts and maximising opportunities for all involved;

¹ The United States of America made a statement on adoption of the Communiqué that is reflected in the record of the Meeting.

7. **Commend** SPREP for its work in supporting the Pacific in climate change matters, noting the need for knowledge to be built and shared across the region on how to assess and mitigate threats associated with climate change;
8. **Welcome** the work of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the authoritative scientific body on climate change that is regarded as providing governments with the best available science on climate change;
9. **Call** for the international community to consider in relevant decision making the findings of the *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius* (IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C), the *Special Report on Climate Change and Land*, and the upcoming *Special Report on Oceans and Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*;
10. **Acknowledge** the urgency highlighted by the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C and **call** for immediate action, not just discussion of ambition, to implement nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement with the objective of achieving the Paris Agreement temperature goal;
11. **Call** on the international community to focus on ambitious global climate change action to reduce emissions through NDCs and long-term low emission development strategies and pursue efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, as set out in the Paris Agreement;
12. **Welcome** the adoption of the rulebook of the Paris Agreement at COP24 in Katowice and **emphasise** the importance of completing the outstanding elements of the rulebook, including the work to ensure environmental integrity and transparency in the use of cooperative approaches under Article 6;
13. **Welcome** Chile's Presidency of COP25 and its hosting of the meeting in Santiago in December and further **acknowledge** the priority placed by Chile on the important nexus between climate change and oceans;
14. **Recall** the Kainaki II declaration and the firm belief that the United Nations Secretary General's Climate Action Summit, the SAMOA Pathway Review and COP25 are global turning points to ensure meaningful, measurable and effective climate change action, and **acknowledge** efforts of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom in leading tracks of the Climate Action Summit;
15. **Welcome** the significant role that the Green Climate Fund plays in supporting developing countries in their efforts to address climate change;
16. **Recall** the Kainaki II declaration and the call on the international community to continue efforts towards meeting their global climate finance commitment of USD 100 billion per year by 2020 from a variety of sources in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation, through bilateral, regional or global mechanisms, including the replenishment of the Green Climate Fund;
17. **Call** on SPREP and other regional GCF Accredited Entities to consult with countries on the proposed Pacific flagship GCF programme on mitigation and adaptation to help island countries realise their climate ambitions;
18. **Call** on the global community to continue to increase support for the operationalisation of measures to support Parties to the Paris Agreement with capacity constraints, especially those that are Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States;

19. **Welcome** the announcement from the Cook Islands of their hosting of the fourth Climate Action Partnership Programme (CAPP IV) in Rarotonga in 2020 and **note** the theme of ‘Climate Drawdown: banking on viable Pacific futures’;

Ocean Governance and Management

20. **Reaffirm** that the Pacific region's most important natural resource is the ocean, and its marine resources and ecosystems, which underpins our identity and community livelihoods, and again **support** integrated ocean management and conservation as a crucial policy approach under the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and the Blue Pacific focus of Pacific island leaders;

21. **Urge** the Pacific to fully engage in the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), taking note of the outcomes of the UN Decade of Ocean Science Workshop held at the Pacific Community in Nouméa on 23 - 25 July 2019, while recognising the need to identify the significant scientific gaps in order to improve and strengthen the capacity development in the Pacific region;

22. **Express appreciation** to both the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, for its central role with respect to ocean governance and integrated ocean management in the region under the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, and the Pacific Community, for its work in relation to the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science;

23. **Acknowledge** the importance of many key ocean related regional and international events that are critical to our efforts on ocean governance and management;

24. **Congratulate** Palau for being a regional and global leader by agreeing to host the Our Ocean Conference 2020, and **encourage** all Pacific island countries and territories to use this important event to secure positive outcomes through joint coordination towards realistic decision making on marine protected areas, climate change, sustainable fisheries, protection of threatened and migratory species, marine pollution, a sustainable blue economy and maritime security;

25. **Express appreciation** to New Caledonia for its leadership in agreeing to host the 10th Pacific Islands Conference on Nature Conservation and Protected Areas in April 2020;

26. **Note** the importance of on-going discussions and negotiations at the Intergovernmental Conference on an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) to promoting integrated ocean governance in areas beyond national jurisdiction and **call** for an ambitious outcome from the negotiations;

27. **Acknowledge** SPREP and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commission for providing technical support to Pacific Island Members engaged in the BBNJ negotiations;

Marine Pollution and Seabed Mining

28. **Noting** the impact of marine plastic pollution on food security, human health, biodiversity, livelihoods and culture, **reaffirm** support for SPREP’s mandate to work with Members to eliminate unnecessary single-use plastics and reduce marine pollution overall, which may be done through regional and international partnerships and effective community engagement in Member countries and territories;

29. **Express** appreciation for the collaborative relationship between SPREP, Members, donors and key partners, working together in a productive and collegial manner to address the critical issue of marine pollution in an integrated and holistic way;

30. **Congratulate** SPREP and the Government of Samoa for their work on the Greening of the Pacific Games 2019, and **acknowledge** the commitment of Solomon Islands to continue this valuable initiative;
31. **Note** the proposal for SPREP to consider a regional tree planting day;
32. **Recall** the Kainaki II declaration for urgent action to support the implementation of the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2018-2025, and **urge** Members to accelerate policies and actions to reduce plastic pollution that embrace sustainable materials management, life cycle and circular economy, and resource efficiency approaches to products, promote alternatives and drive more sustainable practices and consumption patterns;
33. **Acknowledge** the actions of Members in reducing and eliminating single-use plastics and **note** that eight countries or territories have implemented bans on a variety of single-use plastic items and a further eight countries or territories have announced their intent to do so;
34. **Welcome** the decision to amend annexes to the Basel Convention that will make global trade in plastic waste more transparent and better regulated, whilst also ensuring that its management is safer for human health and the environment, and **urge** Members to consider how they will implement the new controls;
35. **Recognise** the need to shift to better liquid waste management practices to protect coastal waters and ecosystems;
36. **Endorse** PACPLAN 2019 as the framework agreement for addressing regional oil and hazardous and noxious substances spill response, **noting** that Members should implement their respective roles and responsibilities to ensure effective responses to marine spill incidents;
37. **Recognise** the significant potential environmental threat from oil leaks from the corroding hulls of World War II wrecks that are now over 70 years old, with such risk likely to be exacerbated by the projected increasing severe severity of tropical cyclones and typhoons due to climate change, and **note** with appreciation the action being taken by SPREP, in close collaboration with the University of Newcastle and the Major Projects Foundation, in addressing potentially polluting World War II wrecks in the Pacific to protect marine ecosystems, culture and livelihoods;
38. **Recognise** the significance of the potential threat of nuclear contamination and unexploded ordnances to the health and security of the Blue Pacific, her people and prospects, and **acknowledge** the importance of addressing the longstanding issues of nuclear testing legacy in the Pacific and further **recall** the need to address ongoing impacts of nuclear testing, including inter alia, human rights, environmental contamination, and health impacts, and acknowledge the need for the commissioning of an appropriate body to undertake a comprehensive, independent and objective scientific assessment of the contamination issue in the Pacific, including in the nuclear test site at Runit;
39. **Recognise** the urgent need for effective implementation of enabling and coherent policy instruments, regulatory frameworks consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and good governance to sustainably manage the marine environment and resources from the potential impacts of seabed mining and related activities;
40. **Recognise** that deep seabed mining has potential economic benefits for all small Pacific island economies and may support national sustainable development goals and such mining may also have the potential to negatively impact the ocean and its marine resources and ecosystems;

41. **Note** the ongoing negotiations to develop Regulations on Exploitation of Mineral Resources in the Area under the International Seabed Authority and **request** that SPREP engages in this process;
42. **Urge** SPREP and its Members to implement the precautionary approach, as set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), and commit to ensure proper licensed exploration and research is conducted and collected data made available as part of effective implementation of robust and transparent environmental impact assessment processes that comply with existing national laws, regional and international conventions and best practice;
43. **Recognise** the need to develop and utilise the best available scientific knowledge to protect the marine environment and to ensure that robust environmental standards apply to seabed mining;
44. **Reaffirm** support to the effective implementation of the SPREP Strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines for Pacific island countries and territories and its application to seabed mining and related activities in line with existing national laws;
45. **Acknowledge** the contribution of SPREP to the Regional Environment Management Framework for deep sea minerals through the Pacific Community's Deep Sea Minerals Project;
46. **Recognise** the importance of cooperation between CROP agencies and the need to develop expertise within the region to provide scientific expert advice with respect to seabed mining, deep-sea ecology and oceanography;

Other business

47. **Welcome** the opening of the Pacific Climate Change Centre on 5 September 2019 and **express appreciation** for the partnership by SPREP, the Government of Samoa and the Government of Japan, with support from the Government of New Zealand, in establishing the Centre as a regional hub and centre of excellence for coordinating strategic and effective Pacific solutions on climate change; and
48. **Note** the Metz Charter on Biodiversity adopted by the G7 in May 2019.

6 September 2019