

Thank you Madam Chair.

Tonga wishes to take the floor on behalf of the Pacific Island Countries present at this meeting, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, and Solomon Islands.

We thank the panel for the insightful presentations which are relevant to this agenda item. We would like to focus on Strategic Goal B, and reflect the following:

Target 5 refers to all natural habitats, and we would like to highlight the gap in translating global marine spatial planning tools into national and regional contexts, including their application, as well as the gap in monitoring habitat loss. Capacity building and capacity constraints are two important issues that our countries in our region continue to face. As such, the Pacific Islands present here in this meeting, invites and urges the Secretariat, donor countries and scientific organizations to explore, support and source innovative ways and means that offer practical solutions to address these issues, to allow our countries to fulfill and meet this important target.

For Target 6, we wish to highlight specific examples and experiences at different levels within our region, for example, the growing emphasis on locally marine managed areas and fisheries reserves, but note that additional support is required to strengthen eco-based adaptive management systems. We highlight work being carried out by Pacific Island Countries concerning the management of fisheries, such as the 'Parties to the Nauru Agreement' (PNA).

For Target 7, we highlight community based activities that promote sustainable agriculture and forestry management, for instance, namely the Pacific Adaptation to Climate Change projects implemented by some Pacific Island Countries, focusing particularly on food security issues, including specific traditional management systems and methods. We draw the attention of and urge the Secretariat, the need for the Secretariat, Parties, donor communities and research and scientific organizations to recognise and integrate consideration of traditional management systems that have the potential to compliment and support the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and achievement of the Biodiversity Aichi Targets.

Target 8, the Pacific Island Countries share experiences on some of the lessons learnt from waste management interventions that have been successfully implemented including innovative ways to manage waste, for example, composting toilets, recycling, e-waste and bulky waste management, and the banning of non-biodegradable plastic bags. Addressing these problems and issues requires an integrated approach to make meaningful protection and management of island biodiversity in our small island nations.

In Target 9, we note that the issues of invasive alien species have been recognized at the political level, at the 43rd Pacific Island Forum Leaders Conference, and welcome the GEF PAS Invasive Species project, which aims at building the foundation (capacities, structures and systems) for management of invasive species issues within the Pacific Island Countries, and stress the vulnerability of small island states to impacts caused by invasive alien species not only on biodiversity but also on livelihoods, small scale income generation and economy as well as human health.

Target 10, we highlight an example on eco-based coral reef conservation and monitoring activities at national and sub-national levels, such as the Phoenix Island protected areas, and the work implemented in Choiseul, Solomon Islands. We also highlight information gaps on ocean acidification for the Pacific Islands, and impacts of climate change on coral reefs. Coral reef ecosystems and the marine biodiversity continue to play an important part of our lives in our islands and urgent work on this must be emphasised and given priority that are meaningful, practical and cost-effective and efficient.

Madam Chair

The Pacific Island Countries welcomes the progress made by GEF in allocating financial resources to us. To date, the Pacific Island Countries have made some progress in terms of minimising direct pressures on island biodiversity. We would like to reiterate that direct pressures on biodiversity is not a short term process (2 or 3 years), but rather a long term process; and the need for research, technological, technical and financial support are much required in the Pacific Island Countries to successfully address and implement the Aichi Targets. Our islands are very small, and any threat to our biodiversity will cause a huge impact on our livelihoods.

Thank you Madam Chair.