

Thank you madam chair for the opportunity to take the floor.

The Cook Islands is making this general statement towards goal B with a link to Goal C and would like to align itself to the Pacific Island Countries statement.

Cook Islands would like to thank the presenters and panellist for a well informative presentation which are relevant to these agenda items.

I'd like to start by noting the importance of pressures to biodiversity as they are by far the number one cause of species extinctions on islands and also have significant impacts on livelihoods and economic development.

The Cook Islands supports and aligns the statement made by New Zealand and welcomes the continued collaboration and technical support provided on relevant areas of work. The Cook Islands also welcomes the progress made by GEF and other donor agencies in allocating technical and financial resources to address biodiversity pressures to our islands.

The Cook Islands also supports the statement made by EU, specifically in reference to the impact of climate change and increasing water temperatures on coral reef ecosystems and other ecosystems.

To date, the Cook Islands have made some progress in terms of minimising direct pressures on biodiversity, through the removal of e-waste and eradication of some invasive spp from our islands and recognizing the important role of biodiversity in addressing the impact of Climate change on our ecosystems.

The Cook Islands have declared half (1 million square kilometer) of its EEZ as a marine protected area to safeguard species and ecosystems diversity within our islands. The marine protected area will provide the necessary framework to promote sustainable development by balancing economic growth and conserving core biodiversity.

While we note the progress we are making in our island, it is also important to highlight that we continue to face unique problems and issues that one way or another, continue to impede our national efforts.

Therefore, the Cook Islands would like to reiterate that direct pressures on biodiversity in our islands is not a short term process (2 or 3 years), but rather a long term process (10-20years) and the need for capacity building, technical and long term financial support are much required to successfully address and implement the Aichi Targets.

As such, we invite and urge 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 country to fulfil and meet this important target.

Madam chair,

As the statement that was made yesterday, We are the Problem and We are the Solution.

Thank you