



STATEMENT

OF

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On the occasion of the

**Sustainable Ocean Initiative / Pacific Ocean Alliance
Regional Workshop for the Pacific Islands**

31 October to 4 November 2016

Apia, Samoa



**Convention on
Biological Diversity**

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Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) / Pacific Ocean Alliance Regional Workshop for the Pacific Islands. I would like to first extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Samoa for hosting this workshop. Samoa's leadership on oceans and SIDS issues, including through the hosting of the Third International SIDS Conference in 2014, and its incredible marine ecosystems make this a very appropriate place to discuss the conservation and sustainable use of marine and coastal biodiversity and its importance for sustainable development.

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the collaborating organizations which were instrumental in bringing this meeting to fruition: namely the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia. I wish to also acknowledge with my deepest gratitude the financial resources that were provided by the Government of Japan, through the Japan Biodiversity Fund, the Government of France, through the French Marine Protected Areas Agency, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation of Australia and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme.

We are fortunate to have a wide range of different stakeholders gathered here with us. We have experts from governments, global and regional intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector with diverse knowledge and expertise in issues related to conservation, fisheries, and tourism, among others. And, although we have different backgrounds and interests, we are all gathered here under a common goal: Sustainable, productive and healthy oceans. This workshop is a great opportunity to tap into the enormous diversity of your experiences and knowledge in order to identify approaches and pathways to enhance conservation and sustainable use of marine resources in the region.

The meeting will also build on previous work of the CBD Secretariat in this region. This includes the CBD Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine areas in the Western South Pacific, which took place in Fiji in 2011. Also, the CBD Secretariat, in collaboration with the Government of Fiji, SPREP and other partners, organized the Regional Capacity-Building Workshop for the Pacific on Achieving Aichi Biodiversity Targets 11 and 12 held in Fiji, in July 2016. This meeting assessed the status of implementation of the different elements of Targets 11 and 12 and identified national priority actions that countries can undertake in the next four years to support the implementation of these Targets.

The scientific evidence is clear that if we hope to achieve sustainable development, we must ensure that biodiversity and ecosystems are healthy and resilient. Given the innumerable amount of ecosystem services provided by the oceans, including for economic growth, poverty reduction, food security, livelihoods and societal well-being, their essential role in achieving sustainable development must be maintained, enhanced and restored.

It is these critical linkages between ecosystems and sustainable development that are at the core of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets. These targets, adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2010, lay out an ambitious agenda for achieving a future where ecosystems are able to provide critical ecosystem services that underpin planetary well-being, and where the global community can sustainably and equitably benefit from biodiversity without impacting the ability of future generations to do so.

The same sentiments are clearly reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 14 which further echoes and reiterates the many ocean-related elements agreed to by countries under

the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. And, the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity are critical to the achievement of a number of other SDGs, including SDG 2 on food security, SDG 13 on climate change and SDG 15 on reversing biodiversity loss. The level of ambition posed by the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals necessitates action at multiple scales, and with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders.

We must also recognize the importance of regional-scale collaboration, both among countries and well as regional organizations. In this vein, the CBD Secretariat organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Sustainable Ocean Initiative (SOI) Global Dialogue with Regional Seas Organizations and Regional Fisheries Bodies on Accelerating Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets in the Republic of Korea. This meeting was the first global level meeting bringing together the regional fisheries bodies and Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans from all over the world. It aimed to identify options and opportunities to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration among regional seas organizations and regional fishery bodies, with a view to further strengthening their complementary roles in supporting national implementation, and is envisaged to be a regular forum for discussion on regional-scale collaboration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Parties to the CBD have acknowledged the major challenges they face in achieving the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, including governance issues and a limited information base, and the need for enhanced institutional, technical, managerial and scientific capacity. In this regard, the Conference of the Parties to the CBD has reiterated calls for enhanced training and capacity development for marine and coastal biodiversity. As well, the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape and many other key regional priorities also outline the critical need for capacity-development efforts to enhance progress towards sustainable development.

The Sustainable Ocean Initiative, or SOI, which is coordinated by the CBD Secretariat, aims to address these calls and respond to the urgent need for capacity development. SOI is a global partnership platform focused on facilitating information-sharing and learning from experience across sectors. SOI aims to enhance the capacity of countries to achieve the Aichi Targets, building on the commitments of CBD Parties, the work of the CBD on marine biodiversity and the many relevant experiences and activities of partners around the world, in collaboration with numerous global and regional partner organizations.

This workshop also comes a very important time. At the global level, we see renewed momentum in addressing oceanic issues: oceans have their own goal in the Sustainable Development Goals and next year's United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 will take this forward. The Paris Agreement on climate change recognizes the importance of oceans. The ongoing process in New York to negotiate a new international instrument for marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is gathering pace. The Ballast Water Management Convention of the International Maritime Organization is now set to enter into force. And, the forthcoming thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the CBD, to take place in December, will address a range of important issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity and will focus on the theme of mainstreaming biodiversity into different sectors, including fisheries and tourism.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If we are to achieve the goals of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, we will have to move away from business-as-usual approaches, mainstream biodiversity into our development planning, governance and decision-making, and take a more holistic approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. In this regard, I urge you to enter the discussions this week with an open mind, prepared to learn from each other and to think critically about what needs to be done across the region to put us on a path towards sustainable development for the oceans.

This meeting represents a valuable opportunity for sharing, learning, and identifying clear steps that can be taken to progress towards sustainable development. However, this is only meaningful if it has a tangible effect on improving our work, helping to better fulfill our respective mandates and achieving our common goals. I hope that this meeting can be the meaningful step forward in promoting concrete progress in achieving global and regional targets and goals, and safeguarding the sustainability of the oceans so that they can continue to be an integral part of the future we want.

Thank you for your attention.