



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement of Hon. Semisi T. Fakahau
Minister for Agriculture and Food, Forestry, and Fisheries
Head of Delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga
At the United Nations Ocean Conference to support the implementation of Goal 14 on
Sustainable Development, Item 8: General Statement**

New York, General Assembly Hall, Tuesday, 06th June 2017

Check against Delivery

Co-Presidents,

At the outset, allow me to join the many heads of delegation in congratulating you both on your masterful stewardship of our Ocean Conference thus far and you can expect the full support and confidence of the delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga during your stewardship. I am confident that in your able leadership, you will guide our Conference to a successful, and more importantly, a practical and implementable, conclusion.

Co-Presidents,

As a large ocean State, Tonga holds Goal 14 very dear to its heart. The livelihood, culture, conservation efforts, and the overall sustainable development of Tonga is dependent on a healthy and resilient ocean due to the essential ecosystem services it provides, including the provision of oceanic resources, and importantly also, its role as a climate regulator.

Co-Presidents,

In collaboration with our partners, Tonga is working to strengthen and enhance its conservation and sustainability efforts, which include:

- (1) Improved coordination amongst line Ministries through the proposed establishment of a technical committee (Ocean 7) to develop a marine spatial plan and sustainable ocean policy;
- (2) Implementation of a ridge-to-reef approach in managing marine resources; and the dedication of 30% of our exclusive economic zone as marine protected areas for the restoration and conservation of the marine ecosystem;
- (3) Implementation of the Tonga Fisheries sector plan to manage and develop the fisheries sector to support the economy and food security of the country; and

- (4) Ongoing development of regulations under the Seabed Minerals Act to ensure the employment of best environmental practices in the current exploration activities carried out in Tonga's waters and sponsorship activities in the Area;

The noted efforts reflect Tonga's strong commitment to the international community on conservation. The work also guarantees sustainable livelihoods and wellbeing for the people of the Kingdom.

In addition, Tonga would like to mention the BBNJ process which it has been engaged in and looks forward to the work of the Preparatory Committee, established under General Assembly resolution 69/292, to be completed in a timely manner next month, with a set of robust recommendations, which should include the launching of intergovernmental negotiations in 2018.

Co-Presidents,

Despite the progress made thus far, to effectively conserve our resources for current and future generations, ambitious actions are necessary at all levels. In this regard, we thank the Co-Facilitators of the "Call for Action", the Permanent Representatives of Singapore and Portugal, and the work carried out to produce a balanced, concise, and action-oriented outcome document for our consideration. We look forward to joining all delegations in endorsing the "Call for Action" at the conclusion of our Conference.

As highlighted in the theme for our Conference, the "Call for Action", and the SAMOA Pathway, "partnerships" are crucial for the successful implementation of Goal 14 in Tonga. Such collective efforts are critical to assist Tonga, whether it be through finance, technology transfer, or capacity building, in joining the international community in successfully meeting all the targets and thus reaching Goal 14.

In this regard, Tonga would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all of our partners who have worked with us to facilitate our conservation and sustainable development efforts, through the provision of assistance, in all forms. Tonga looks forward to further enhancing our cooperation through current, and future, genuine and durable partnerships.

Co-Presidents,

To conclude, the targets have been set, with many of them to be achieved in two years. Our Conference provides us the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas, and to more importantly, come up with real and practical solutions in which conservation and sustainability efforts can be enhanced, and strengthened to meet the targets of the goal, and to even surpass the intentions of the targets and the goal itself. Only in such an ambitious manner, would we achieve the successful implementation of Goal 14, and guarantee a healthy and resilient ocean for our current and future generations.

We look forward to contributing further to the success of the Conference.

I thank you.