



Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS)  
and Timor-Leste



Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission  
of UNESCO



Global Ocean Forum

**8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
3-7 February 2014, Trusteeship Council Chamber, New York**

Side Event on

***Towards a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Oceans and Seas: Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans and Seas—Prosperous and Resilient Peoples and Communities***  
3 February 2014

Jointly Organized by the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) and Timor-Leste,  
the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, and the Global Ocean Forum

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## **OCEANS AND SEAS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL (SDG) SIDE EVENT SUMMARY REPORT TO THE CO-CHAIRS OF THE OWG ON SDGS EIGHTH SESSION**

### **Overview**

The 12 Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS), namely, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Timor-Leste; the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, and the Global Ocean Forum (GOF), conducted a Joint Side Event on 3 February 2014 at the Trusteeship Council Chamber during the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

Entitled ***Towards a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Oceans and Seas: Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans and Seas—Prosperous and Resilient Peoples and Communities***, the event drew over 100 participants from Member States, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

The key Speakers at the event were H.E. Mr. Robert G. Aisi, Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations and Chair of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) as Moderator; H.E. Mrs. Makurita Baaro, Permanent Representative of Kiribati to the United Nations, speaking on behalf of PSIDS and Timor-Leste on the imperative of a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas; Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO; Dr. Biliana Cicin-Sain, President, Global Ocean Forum and Professor, University of Delaware; Dr. Arni Mathiesen, Assistant Director-General, Fisheries and Aquaculture Department, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN; Dr. Martin Visbeck, GEOMAR Helmholtz Centre for Ocean Research, Kiel, Germany, and International Council of Science (ICSU); and H.E. Ms. Isabelle Picco, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the United Nations.

This side event was broad-based and inclusive of UN Member States, multilateral intergovernmental organizations, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), academia, and NGOs.

## Key Outcomes

The salient elements of the outcome of the Side Event are outlined below:

**1. *Healthy, productive, and resilient oceans and seas, supporting human development, poverty eradication, and economic growth, whilst preserving essential ecological goods and services, are critical to all; central to sustainable development, and therefore a universal agenda.***

- Oceans and seas, covering three-quarters of the Earth, are essential for planetary survival as they serve as the Earth's respiratory system, producing oxygen for life and absorbing carbon dioxide, thereby regulating the climate and temperature. The planet's hydrological cycle begins and ends with the oceans, as all rivers and streams lead to the oceans.
- The global ocean economic activity is estimated to be between USD 3-6 trillion, contributing to the world economy in many important ways, such as:
  - 90 percent of global trade moves by marine transport
  - Fisheries and aquaculture supply 4.3 billion people with more than 15 percent of annual consumption of animal protein
  - Over 30 percent of global oil and gas produced is extracted offshore
  - Expanding knowledge on marine biodiversity has provided breakthrough advances in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, food production, and aquaculture
- Oceans and seas are essential for social well-being with over 40 percent, or 3.1 billion, of the world's population within 100 kilometers of the ocean or sea in about 150 coastal and island nations. "Blue-green economy" increases overall wealth of a nation while producing a higher GDP growth rate. Sustainable ocean activities (e.g. fishing, renewable energy, responsible eco-tourism) increase employment and reduce poverty, malnutrition, and pollution. Ocean-based economies provide more opportunities for the empowerment and employment of women.
- Despite the clear recognition and commitment by the international community to conserve and sustainably use the Oceans and Seas under various international agreements, including the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*, and the increasing efforts at international, regional, national, and sub-national levels, the health and well-being of the ocean and seas have declined throughout the decades, compromising the many benefits and services that they provide to the global community.
- It is imperative for these growing concerns to be addressed in a comprehensive and coherent manner to reverse and restore the health, productivity and resilience of the oceans and seas for the wellbeing of humanity and the ecosystem for today's and future generations. The Post-2015 Development Agenda provides the ideal and timely opportunity for the international community to do so.

2. *The need for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas was underscored at the meeting. The major proposal on an SDG on Oceans and Seas was made by the PSIDS entitled “A Healthy, Productive and Resilient Oceans and Seas.” The details of the proposal were submitted to the OWG on SDGs website, together with the final text of the PSIDS and Timor-Leste Statement delivered by the President of Palau, H.E. Mr Tommy Remengesau Jr., at the OWG on SDGs 8<sup>th</sup> session’s first plenary. Also various specific proposals on possible targets for an SDG on Oceans and Seas were presented.*

- Oceans and seas are not an area of interest solely to those who live closest to them. Marine resources and ecosystems provide valuable services in critical areas such as food security and poverty eradication not only to islands and coastal states but to all.
- The implementation of an SDG on Oceans and Seas would provide a new impetus for the integration of the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, overcoming deficits of sector-specific goals or approaches, which has been the main approach to managing the ocean so far.
- Building on the momentum of the Rio+20 Conference, several proposals have been put forward for a stand-alone SDG on Ocean and Seas to implement the mandate given at Rio+20. The Pacific Small Island Developing States have proposed a SDG on achieving **“a healthy, productive, and resilient oceans and seas”** with three main targets linked to international actionable measures to be taken, including:
  - i. Achieving a healthy marine environment
    - Actionable measures include: establishing marine protected areas (Aichi target of 10 percent of coastal and marine areas); enhancing technical and scientific collaboration; effective implementation of international conventions; addressing pollution from sea and land-based sources; and action on ocean acidification
  - ii. Achieving healthy fish stocks
    - Actionable measures include: environmental impact assessments (EIAs), including of cumulative impacts; implementation of measures on illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, deterring the use of destructive fishing measures, prohibition of subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing; and strong international cooperation and technical support for implementation, particularly for SIDS;
  - iii. Realizing the economic benefits of sustainable development of marine resources
    - Actionable measures include: improved access to fisheries and markets for subsistence, small scale and artisanal fisheries, women fish workers and indigenous people, particularly in SIDS, and support for sustainable tourism activities.

3. *There was a broad consensus at the meeting that an SDG on Oceans and Seas is essential to achieve sustainable development at both national and global levels in the post-2015 development agenda. This follows the strong mandate on oceans and seas given at Rio+20, supported by views emanating from fisheries, science, and policy leaders representing governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, and the science community, that:*

- The interconnectedness and universal dimension of the ocean is the underlying and compelling reason for an SDG on Oceans and Seas, as global problems and actions will have a direct impact on local responses and practices, and vice versa, with all nations benefiting in one way or another from ocean goods and services.
- Equity and genuine partnership should also be a cornerstone for shaping an SDG on Oceans and Seas, and should be rooted in the Law of the Sea Convention, as well as in existing international commitments emanating from Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and the Rio+20 outcome document, *The Future We Want*.
- Certain delegations during the side event expressed their views that the sustainable development agenda must move away from approaching the issues as different “silos” and move toward an integrated, ecosystem-based approach. Thus, proposals for targets to be integrated in an ecosystem-based management approach were shared. This was a recurring theme also at the plenary discussions on oceans and seas at the plenary of the 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Open Working Group on 3 February 2014.
- A stand-alone goal on oceans and seas should be science-based, incorporate observation, understanding, and protection of oceans and seas, while addressing the social and economic aspects.

**4. *The importance and the need for a dedicated Oceans and Seas SDG in the post-2015 sustainable development framework was highly and clearly emphasized in many of the presentations and remarks from the participants at the side event. Also, supportive remarks on this proposal were made by an increasing number of Member States and many Non-Governmental Organizations, as was the case also at the first plenary meeting of the OWG on SDGs 8<sup>th</sup> session and in the Major Groups’ session.***

- Apart from the 12 Pacific SIDS and Timor-Leste, there is a growing number of UN Member States, across all UN geographical regions, that have expressed support for a stand-alone SDG on Oceans and Seas.
- Statements from other UN Member States emphasized the importance of Oceans and Seas and its role in planetary survival; the need for coordination and collaboration on the way forward; and the need to prioritize or build on existing international commitments on Oceans and Seas.
- Similarly, strong supportive Statements for a stand-alone Oceans and Seas SDG were made by Intergovernmental Organizations, including UN Agencies such as IOC/UNESCO, FAO, and the World Bank, which pledged to work with UN Member States upon request to help develop Oceans and Seas SDG indicators and targets.
- Likewise, NGOs, including the Global Ocean Forum, International Council for Science, World Ocean Council, Diverse Voices and Action for Equality (DIVA for Equality), Fiji, Children and Youth Major Groups, and International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), Cook Islands voiced their support for this proposal. They also highlighted the need for integration, cooperation, accountability, protection and responsible management, shared responsibility, ecosystem approach, specific roles for civil society especially for women and youth, an inclusive process, and an appropriate institutional framework for an SDG on Oceans and Seas.

## **Main Conclusions**

- 1) *There must be a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal on Oceans and Seas in the Post-2015 Development Agenda for a sustainable future for humanity and the ecosystem.***
- 2) *Future next steps and discussion must focus on how the goals, targets, and indicators will be written; how to measure and ensure the health of the ocean; and how to ensure that oceans and seas remain a viable long-term resource for present and future generations.***
  - Recognizing that effective governance at all levels involving all stakeholders, especially women and youth, is critical for advancing the sustainable development of the oceans and seas, an integrated approach that links key issues and challenges across ecological, jurisdictional, and political boundaries is critical.
  - Building the capacity of nations to sustainably and equitably manage the Oceans and Seas under national jurisdiction is key, especially for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), African countries, and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including capacity in marine management and marine natural and social sciences, and through technology transfer and the use of traditional and non-traditional tools and approaches.
  - While it is recognized that it is the prerogative of the UN Member States to decide on the Post-2015 Development Agenda SDGs, including on the proposal for a dedicated Oceans and Seas SDG, the role of IGOs/NGOs in providing the contextual knowledge, supportive technical information and support in the process is also critically important. This is given the need for the Post-2015 Development Agenda process to be inclusive, broad-based and universal.
  - It is important to develop the public's capacity to exercise ocean and seas stewardship by improving awareness, ocean literacy, and opportunities for action regarding critical ocean and seas issues.