

6th September, Apia, Samoa

Partnerships for a Blue Pacific – an exploration of the role and contribution of Civil Society

Position Paper: Blue Pacific Economy - Our Ocean at the heart of sustainable development

We celebrate and affirm your leadership in placing our Ocean at the core of the 2030 Agenda with the stand-alone SDG 14 on Oceans. We reiterate the statement delivered at the UN Ocean Conference that “we are the custodians of some of the world’s richest biodiversity and marine resource and our greatest asset must be sustainably managed for the benefit of our present and future generations.”¹ Life below water has a powerful influence on the global sustainable developmental agenda, and we the ‘People of the Ocean’ demand accountability and shared responsibilities from the Global community. We also recognize the SAMOA Pathway as it mandates and guides you in strategically navigating our Blue Ocean. However, we need to bring the same message HOME and institute our ‘Blue Ocean’ at the heart of our Pacific sustainable development.

Therefore, **we urge** Pacific Island Leaders to **take into consideration the full scale of ocean issues** including the emerging extractive industry of seabed mining, and integrated sustainable approaches that account for social issues. The wellbeing of custodians is equally important in promoting stewardship, and in this regard, we recognize the need for independent social and environmental impact assessments of trade agreements.

In this modern age, we feel that it is unacceptable that Governments and multi-national companies should collude to impose an industrial activity that risks substantial social and environmental impacts, without the fullest and most inclusive consultations and technical assessments of impacts. We must not advance activities that risk the long-term sustainability of our oceans for the short-term gains of economic expediency. The history of extractive industries in our islands region is not a happy one. We must divert resources to economic activities that will build a more inclusive and sustainable future for our island communities. We therefore urge the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders to:

1. **Take a firm stand against seabed mining and stop all activities related to sea bed mining in the pacific - be they exploratory work, or developing the enabling legal framework.**

¹ Statement by Hon. Tuilaepa Lufesolai Sialele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa at the High-Level Pacific Regional Side Event by PIFS on ‘Our values and identity as stewards of the world’s largest oceanic continent, The Blue Pacific’. UN Headquarters, New York, 5 June 2017. *These papers were produced by civil society representatives that attended the Regional Civil Society Organisations Forum organised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat with support from the European Union. The contents present the views of the civil society representatives and can in no way be reflected as views of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat or the European Union.*

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We acknowledge the progress made in advancing the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries, but to remain true to our role as stewards of the Pacific Ocean, we feel there is a need to revitalize and redirect our focus from just the economic returns from fisheries, towards integrated shared responsibilities for the sustainable management of our Ocean. **We call on our Leaders to:**

2. **Defer** the ratification of PACER Plus until independent impact assessments, in consultation with CSOs, are conducted, including adequate food safety and security conditions, and issues identified are addressed with appropriate amendments to the text of PACER PLUS;
3. **Ensure the values and objectives** contained in the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape guide the Regional Roadmap for Sustainable Pacific Fisheries.
4. **Include** regional and national umbrella CSOs within the governance structure of the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape as a means of strengthening governance and capturing the notion of shared responsibilities.
5. **Recognize and act** upon the gaps identified in the Sustainable Pacific Fisheries Roadmap, with specific focus on the following:
 - a. **Provide political and financial support** to relevant agencies to develop evidence-based policies responding to research on fishery health, and addressing the loss of tuna resources eastwards and on the high seas.
 - b. **Reaffirm** the collective stewardship approach in ocean management and investment, to compensate for impacts of climate change on tuna stocks.
 - c. **Ensure** that the Rights of Indigenous Peoples are always maintained within policy decision-making processes, including the incorporation of local culture, traditional skills and knowledge to develop Pacific technologies and innovations that create exportable intellectual property products and services for our region's economy while ensuring the sustainability of our fisheries.

We acknowledge the PIFS CSO Engagement Strategy, and appreciate the recognition for strategic partnerships and collaboration. We urge therefore that the PIFS CSO Engagement Strategy be formally adopted across all levels of engagement, including CROP agencies and regional implementation taskforces.