



## 52ND PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM STATEMENT ON WTO FISHERIES SUBSIDIES

9 November 2023

Leaders **acknowledged** the strong leadership role played by the Forum WTO Members in the adoption of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies at the WTO Twelfth Ministerial Conference (MC12) held in June 2022. This Agreement prohibits subsidies to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; subsidies to overfished stocks and subsidies to fishing in the unmanaged high seas.

The value of fish associated with IUU fishing in the Pacific for 2017-2019 is estimated at USD 330 million. The Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is an additional tool that complements fisheries management efforts in curbing IUU fishing in the region. In this connection, Leaders **welcomed** the ratification of the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies by three Forum Members – Australia, Fiji, New Zealand – and **urged** other Forum WTO Members to also ratify the Agreement.

Leaders also **welcomed** the strong momentum of work in the second wave of the negotiations towards comprehensive disciplines including on subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing noting with appropriate and effective special and differential treatment (S&DT) for developing countries and least developed countries.

Leaders **noted** that 84% harmful fishing subsidies go to capacity enhancing programs that fuel overcapacity and overfishing, which lead to the continuing decline in global fish stocks. While noting that the region's commercial stocks are in good health, Leaders **underlined** the risks of allowing subsidised fleets into the region as reflected in their 2018 decision for distant water fishing nations to remove subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing.

Leaders therefore **reiterated** their call in 2022 for all Forum WTO Members to work together to advance the negotiations and to aim to conclude the second wave of the negotiations towards comprehensive disciplines that include subsidies to overcapacity and overfishing with appropriate and effective S&DT by MC13 in February 2024. The conclusion of these comprehensive disciplines will contribute towards the 2050 Strategy Thematic Area on Oceans and Environment and ensure that the WTO fully delivers on the SDG 14.6.