Statement for Forum Dialogue Partners Session

at the 50th Pacific Islands Forum, Tuvalu

At the outset, we would like to congratulate Right Honourable Enele Sosene Sopoaga, Prime Minister of Tuvalu on assuming the Chairmanship of the Forum and successfully hosting the Summit.

2. We also felicitate President of the Republic of Nauru His Excellency Mr. Baron Divavesi Waqa for a remarkably successful term as the Chair of the Forum.

3. India's relations with all the Pacific Island Countries have been growing from strength to strength, particularly since the historic visit of Hon. Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi to Fiji in November 2014, when the first Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC) was held. This was followed by the second Summit in August 2015 in India and we are now working towards organising the next Summit very soon.

4. Climate Change is one of the greatest threats, the world faces today. For Pacific Island Countries, the threat assumes existential proportions. There is urgent need to not only reduce our carbon footprint through promotion of renewable energy and sustainable lifestyles but also to foster and augment the resilience of communities and nations, particularly the most vulnerable ones to deal with the effects of Climate Change.

5. India, under the visionary leadership of Hon. Prime Minister of India Mr. Narendra Modi, has taken up an ambitious plan to promote renewable energy at an unprecedented scale. In his own words, “India believes in growth but is also committed to protecting the environment. We will meet our development needs but in a cleaner and greener way.” Respect for nature is an integral part of India’s value system as our traditional practices contribute to a sustainable lifestyle.

6. India is on track to meet its international commitments on reducing the emissions intensity of its GDP. India is also on track to meet the 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution. Power generation from Renewables have crossed one-fifth of India's total energy capacity. With total wind power installed capacity of around 35GW, India is currently at the fourth place globally after China, USA and Germany. With about 24GW installed capacity, India is the fifth largest solar market in the world in terms of installed capacity.

7. Not only are we promoting renewable energy in India, we are also building alliances with our international partners to promote solar energy. International Solar Alliance - ISA, jointly launched in collaboration with France is a step in that direction. We are happy to note that more and more Pacific Island Countries are joining us in this Alliance. Last year, India hosted the Founding Conference of the ISA in New Del-
hi which saw encouraging participation and support from Hon’ble Prime Minister of Tuvalu and many other Heads of State and Government from the region.

8. India is supporting projects in the region which promote sustainable development and resilience against climate change. Apart from capacity building and human resource development programmes, we have also supported projects such as construction of sea-wall, solar electrification, construction of resilient infrastructure and projects aimed at women empowerment through our bilateral aid budget.

9. At multilateral level also, we are partnering with International Agencies to deliver projects in the region aimed at promotion of sustainability and climate resilience. India-UN Development Partnership Fund was established in 2017. India has committed US$ 150 million to this Fund and to the Commonwealth Window. This Fund has established a vibrant development partnership with the PIF countries. We are also implementing projects through India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Fund.

10. Some of the projects being undertaken across the region are: (i) Climate Early Warning System which covers seven countries - Cook Islands, Kiribati, Micronesia, Marshall Island, Nauru, Solomon Island and Tonga (ii) Community Health Centre Improvement Project in Palau (iii) Mahatma Gandhi Centres for Excellence in IT in Cook Islands, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, Niue, Samoa and Vanuatu (iv) Repair and Reconstruction of Export Building and Fumigation Centre in Tonga (v) Solar Power Systems for Funafuti here in Tuvalu (vi) Project on National Data Collection Initiative in Vanuatu (vii) Waste to Compost Facility in Nauru and (viii) Solar-powered small home refrigeration systems in Marshall Island. We are also implementing a project to provide solar energy infrastructure to power the residences of Heads of State of eleven Pacific Island countries. In addition, we are partnering with IBSA Facility for Poverty and Hunger Alleviation Fund to implement projects aimed at empowerment of rural women in Fiji and Coconut Sector Development in Kiribati.

11. We are also very happy to be able to partner with Government of Tuvalu and other development partners for construction of Tuvalu Convention Centre. It is a magnificent building which is also a tangible and lasting example of our development partnership with Tuvalu.

12. Promotion of sustainable agriculture, generation of employment and supporting key sectors of economic growth has also been an important aspect of our development cooperation. India has completed its commitment of supporting the Fijian SME sector through a financial grant of US$ 5mn. India is also supporting the Government of Fiji’s plan for revival of Fijian sugar industry. We are also looking at ways to upgrade the Fijian railway network.

13. India is also supporting our friends in the region in dealing with catastrophic consequences of natural disasters. We are responding to these natural disasters in a timely manner - be it the assistance in the aftermath of the Tropical Cyclone Winston in Fiji or Tropical Cyclone Gita in Tonga or the mass displacement of populations due to volcanic eruptions in Ambae Islands of Vanuatu. India is standing firmly by the side of our partners in the region - as an all-weather friend.
14. We also wish to support the fight against Non-Communicable Diseases in the Pacific and to promote Sustainable lifestyles through Yoga and Ayurveda. We are thankful to all the countries for supporting celebration of International Day of Yoga to fight the NCDs. We are now working on strategies to implement training of Yoga teachers from Pacific Island Countries.

15. We would like to take this opportunity to state India’s position on the growing relevance and wider acceptance of the concept of Indo-Pacific. As the focus of rapid economic growth has moved from the Pacific shores of Asia toward South and South-east Asia, the Gulf region and East and South Africa, it has become necessary to revisit older definitions of the region, which excluded the most dynamic growth nodes, like India. At the same time, much of the world's trade in goods and energy products flow across sea lanes in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. These are today the world's super-highways on which wealth and prosperity is created.

16. Recognition of these realities has prompted several countries to evolve their own Indo-Pacific concepts. Situated at the heart of the Indo-Pacific, it was essential for India to put forward its own vision of this region. This is especially so, given India's long civilizational connect with the nations of East and Southern Africa, the Gulf, South Asia, and South-east Asia, as well as the fact that over 60% of our trade, and most of our investment relationships are within this region. This is why our Prime Minister set out an Indian vision of the Indo-Pacific region in his speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2018.

17. India's approach focuses on a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific. We emphasize respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations in the region, equality of all nations, peaceful resolution of disputes, avoidance of use or threat of use of force, and adherence to international laws, rules and regulations. Our objective is a multi-faceted engagement with all countries in the region and those with interests in it, encompassing political, security, economic, and socio-cultural spheres, aimed at Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR).

18. We do not see the Indo-Pacific as a new theater for geo-strategic contestation or as an exclusive club of a limited number of nations. It includes all nations in this geography and others beyond, who have a stake in it. And while our vision might have points of convergence with that of others, it is entirely India's own construct.

19. Ours is a maritime-forward perspective. However, it is not a replacement of our continental partnerships in Eurasia or East Asia; it is instead an equally important maritime supplement to our continental perspective.

20. India will work with all in the region to keep the seas, space and airways free and open; to keep nations secure from terrorism and piracy; to ensure that global cyber-space is free from disruption, and to ensure access to and responsible use of global commons. We are willing to partner all countries to ensure fair, transparent and balanced trading systems, and to enhance connectivity, for national, regional and global economic growth.
21. In this framework, we recognize that unity and centrality of ASEAN must be a key element in developing an Indo-Pacific vision. Not only is this in recognition of the geographic centrality of ASEAN in any definition of the region, but it is also based on the simple fact that ASEAN-led regional mechanisms - especially the East Asia Summit, as the only leaders-led forum - are the most inclusive fora currently for discussions on the issues of importance to the region.

22. We aim for a region built upon five key principles: Respect (for all as well as for international laws); Dialogue to resolve differences, and to use existing fora, as relevant, including ASEAN-led fora like East Asia Summit, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA); Cooperation as the means to establish Peace and Prosperity for all.

23. In conclusion, we would like to reiterate the commitment of India to the lasting relationship with all the partners in the region as we work together to achieve the goals of sustainable development so as to secure our collective future for the generations to come.