



PACIFIC OCEAN ALLIANCE MEETING PLENARY SESSION

3 – 4 October 2019, Suva, Fiji

Securing Our Future as the Blue Pacific Continent:
Our People, Our Place, Our Prospects



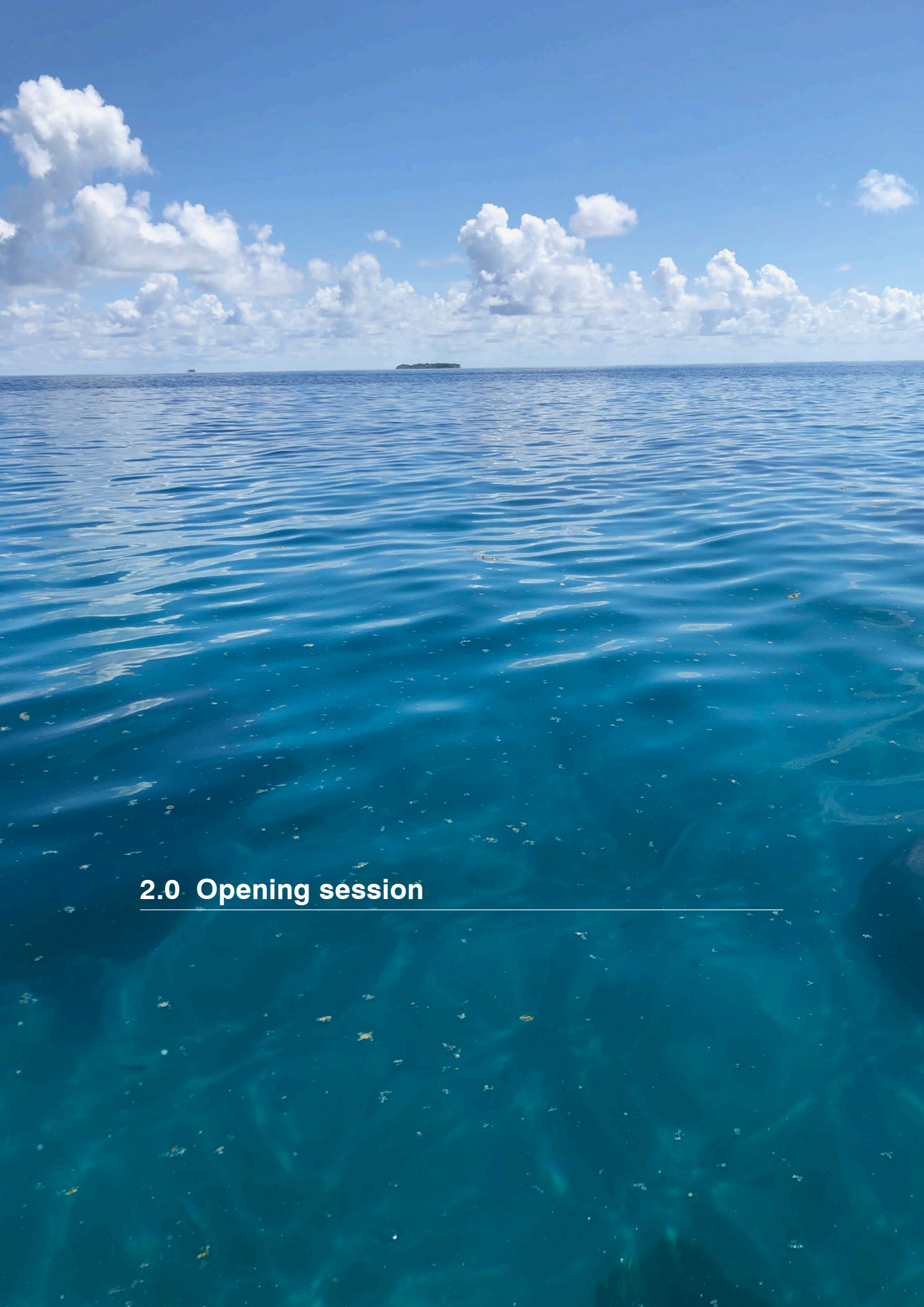


RECORDS OF THE MEETING

1.0 Introduction

1. On the 3 and 4 of October 2019, a meeting of the Pacific Ocean Alliance (POA) took place at the headquarters of the Pacific Islands Forum, in Suva, Fiji, under the theme, “*Securing our future as the Blue Pacific Continent – Our People, Our Place, Our Prospects*”. A two-day workshop preceded the POA from 1 – 2 October 2019 and sought to discuss the current state-of-affairs on the implementation of key regional and international ocean-related instruments and commitments, explore a long-term vision for the region’s ocean, and exchange ideas on important thematic ocean issues, including building advocacy messages that consistently resonate the Blue Pacific narrative in various fora.
2. The POA Meeting was organized and facilitated by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, with the support of the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (OPOC), in collaboration with the POA Reference Group consisting of regional POA members. The United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on the Ocean, Ambassador Peter Thomson also attended the POA Meeting and delivered the keynote address. Government Officials from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau, and Vanuatu; CROP agencies – FFA, SPC, SPREP and USP; Government representatives of the United Kingdom, and Spain, the European Union; and other POA members from regional and international organizations such as - ADB, Commonwealth Secretariat, United Nations agencies (UNEP, FAO, UNDP), World Bank Group, PIDF, Conservation International, DAWN, LMMA, PANG, WWF Pacific, Pacific Disability Forum, PICAN, Pacific Youth Council, Pew, Siwatibau and Sloan, Swire Shipping participated. The full list of Participants can be viewed on the OPOC website.
3. The POA as an open-ended, voluntary information-sharing and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism established through the endorsement of the Framework of the Pacific Oceanscape by Leaders in 2010, has a genuine interest in working together to meet Pacific Leaders’ vision and objectives that are outlined in the Pacific Region’s ocean policies, including the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape*. Consequently, the views captured in the current summary of the meeting does not represent the official position of any country, agency or individual.
4. The objectives of the 2019 POA meeting were to:
 - Provide the necessary platform to encourage a collective, integrated approach to considering ocean issues of the Blue Pacific Continent;
 - Promote collaboration on the implementation and reporting of regional and global ocean policies through genuine partnerships;
 - Look at means of improving implementation for Pacific Ocean policies, including resource mobilization; capacity building support; transfer of applied ocean and islands science and technology, and the acquisition of appropriate data and information;

- Consider priorities and future scenarios of the Blue Pacific Continent; and,
 - Consider approaches and initiatives to inform regional positions for upcoming global ocean and related events - for 2020 and beyond.
5. The two-day workshop held prior to the POA Meeting considered: (i) a brief overview of the Pacific region's progress on SDG14, Voluntary Commitments submitted to UNOC 2017, Samoa Pathway, Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape (FPO), Aichi Targets under the CBD, and discussed implementation and reporting challenges; (ii) elaborated on possible future scenarios of securing the Blue Pacific Continent; and, (iii) discussed the way forward for POA and possible ocean advocacy messages for 2019 and 2020.
 6. The plenary segment considered and discussed the reports of the two-day workshop together with a broad range of thematic ocean issues, and emerging approaches to integrated ocean management at national and regional scales. During the course of the meeting, there were clear indications of the need to further catalyze and accelerate the action of Blue Pacific Ocean priorities, within the current framework of regional ocean and sector-related policies and plans.
7. **The full programme can be accessed in the OPOC website.**



2.0 Opening session

2.0 Opening session

8. The meeting was opened by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner (POC) and Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, Dame Meg Taylor, who reaffirmed the important role of POA in advancing the vision for a secure Blue Pacific. The Commissioner emphasized the important role of the POA in supporting strengthened and improved coherence, cooperation and coordination across the multiple sectors and cross-cutting thematic issues of the ocean and its resources. Examples ranging from the Pacific preparations to the first UN Ocean Conference in 2017 to the ongoing BBNJ negotiations were used to illustrate the value of the POA in supporting the voice of the Blue Pacific.
9. Citing the numerous recently published reports that predict and forecast a bleak outlook which reinforce the growing global consensus that we now face a climate emergency, as well as the challenges arising from intensifying geopolitical and geostrategic competition in and around our region, the POC stressed the timely relevance and importance of strengthening integrated ocean management and coordination among key sectors, including for living and non-living ocean resources, transport, tourism, energy, and the environment. The full statement of Pacific Ocean Commissioner can be viewed in the OPOC website.
10. In his keynote address to the POA, UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Oceans, Ambassador Peter Thomson, expressed his gratitude to the Pacific Ocean Commissioner for the "timely" meeting, which is eight months in advance of the second UN Ocean Conference - to be held in Lisbon in June 2020. He recalled that the Pacific set the bar high at the UN Ocean Conference held in New York in 2017 and the world would be looking to the Pacific region for leadership in Lisbon.
11. He underscored the unique moral authority and obligation of Pacific Leaders to speak out on the Climate Crisis and to act with ambition and urgency on Climate Change and Ocean issues and initiatives. He further highlighted the many positive commitments and actions from regional actors, including regional organizations, national governments, as well as their parliaments, citing, particularly, the Taraho'i Declaration on a sustainable Blue Economy - the outcome of the Parliamentary Conference held in French Polynesia (September 2019), which supports Pacific Leaders' efforts to secure the future of the Ocean.
12. Despite the huge challenges and threats, the Ocean is facing, the Special Envoy also stressed the immense opportunities for positive change. In particular, the multi-stakeholder nature of the POA membership, which enables the pursuit of solutions to the challenges we face through inclusivity and genuine, enduring partnerships. In concluding, he urged the POA meeting to remain faithful to the dedicated pursuit of the objectives and commitments to the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) - in particular, implementation of the SDG14 targets. The full statement of Ambassador Peter Thomson can be found in the OPOC website.



3.0 Session 1: Setting the scene – future of the Ocean discussion

3.0 Session 1: Setting the scene – future of the Ocean discussion

13. The POA plenary considered the results and recommendations of the Workshop theme focusing on future ocean scenarios, that would secure our future as the Blue Pacific Continent. The meeting recognized and acknowledged the central role of Members through the Forum Officials Committee, and its Sub-Committee on the 2050 Strategy and Regional Architecture, in driving the development of the 2050 Strategy, and the potential role of the POA to provide evidence-based scientific and technical inputs to inform the strategy to be garnered during the proposed consultation process.
14. In the report of the workshop to the plenary, there were factors identified that could be considered in the 2050 strategy, by taking into account future prospects of the Blue Pacific Continent through the lens' of Protecting our Ocean's Health and Integrity and Sustainably Managing our Island and Ocean Resources, as set by the Leaders in Tuvalu in August 2019 as two of the five cornerstones to their 2050 strategy.
15. Broad factors identified as influential for the future of the Blue Pacific Continent were: Regional Solidarity, Governance, Means of Implementation (finance, technology, capacity, education), Climate Change, Capacity to Manage Risks, Marine Resources, Marine environment, Corporate Interests, and Geopolitics. Based on these elements, participants elaborated best, worst, and status quo/business-as-usual case scenarios. There was understanding and wide acceptance that factors being discussed were interrelated and could have mutual influences on other factors - potentially affecting the future of the Blue Pacific Continent.
16. Overall, the most plausible scenarios had a mix of status quo, improvement, and worsening projections. In these scenarios, the region would have made some efforts in addressing negative factors over which they had control or influence. However, factors outside of their control or requiring more efforts, such as climate change, pollution, or capacity constraints, would limit their ability to fully succeed. The balance between environmental conservation and sustainable management and use was considered an important aspect of the discussions requiring more considered multi-stakeholder, multi-interest dialogue going forward.
17. The best scenarios suggested the ability of the Blue Pacific Continent to realize and secure its full potential and would be through demonstrating strong ownership at-all-levels and through having a strong sense of regionalism and embracing regional solidarity. The underpinning factor, in addition to the ownership and shared values of the Blue Pacific Continent, is the '*political will*' which unlocks potential

for certainty in decision-making related to cooperation, genuine partnership, clear vision, identification and delivery of adequate means.

18. While there was relative agreement on the broad categories of factors, there was divergence among participants on how to address specific factors, in particular, the extraction of our natural capital such as non-living resources (deep-seabed minerals). On the one hand, some participants indicated that this activity could enable countries in the region to gain significant substantive and alternative economic revenues, which could build self-reliance and socio-economic prosperity. On the other, some participants stressed the potential negative, transboundary impacts that deep-sea mining could have across the ocean - on other economic and social sectors and on the livelihoods and well-being of Pacific people.
19. It was emphasized that Leaders expected that the pathway and means to achieving their 2050 vision and objectives would need to be based on science, that the 2050 strategy presented the region with a valuable and visionary opportunity to plan an ambitious way forward to address issues, in their own Pacific way. Opportunities to change the trajectory, including through more genuine and durable partnerships with philanthropies and the private sector, as well as the development of clean and low emissions technologies (such as in the maritime transport sector), that is relevant to and appropriate for our countries and communities was highlighted. POA participants suggested a focus on financing and investing in infrastructure and risk resilience-supportive measures. The work on ocean finance being implemented by OPOC and FFA, under the PROP project, was identified as an important enabling initiative moving forward, to come up with sustainable ocean financing instruments for effective implementation of national and regional ocean policies.
20. The meeting also discussed the need for a future strategy to consider worst-case scenarios based on scientific findings and forecasts (such as in the recent Special IPCC reports on *Global Warming of 1.5°C*, and *Ocean & Cryosphere in a Changing Climate*) and identify appropriate responses needed. The meeting also considered the approach of identifying certain tipping points based on the scenarios, and, discussed potential implications on the region's oceanic fisheries.
21. To conclude the discussions, the Pacific Ocean Commissioner stressed that partnership is very important and a key to pursuing regional efforts on managing, using and conserving the ocean. It will only work if all stakeholders come on board so that there is a full understanding of the needs and aspirations of the Blue Pacific Continent and community, as well as the magnitude of the challenges that it faces as Small Islands States making up the oceanic continent.



4.0 Session 2: Where are we at, in the implementation of key regional and global policies?

4.0 Session 2: Where are we at, in the implementation of key regional and global policies?

22. The POA plenary considered the results and recommendations of the Workshop theme that, focused on some of the challenges, gaps and opportunities for adopting a regional approach to strengthening the sharing of ocean information, measurement and reporting, and implementing ocean policies and ocean commitments made in global fora (for example, the 1st UN Ocean Conference and the annual, Our Ocean Conferences). The meeting reviewed regional progress in implementing and reporting on the Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape, as well as the global ocean commitments such as SDG14 and Aichi Targets, and discussed concrete actions needed to fill gaps, address the challenges – to improve implementation of ocean priorities of the Pacific.
23. Key outcomes of the discussions revealed that the Pacific region is ‘*not-on-track*’ in terms of addressing its ocean priorities and the targets and commitments made. The discussions indicated the need to stock-take on the existing policies and accelerate and amplify efforts on the region’s ocean policies and priorities. There was consensus on the need for better coordination and collaboration on implementing and reporting on ocean priorities and commitments - at all levels (from community – national, regional), and global. This approach would also ensure that actions undertaken at the community level would be captured in terms of reporting, given this aspect is often left out from national and regional reports.
24. In connection with the need to secure the future of our Blue Pacific Continent, it was acknowledged that more action is needed in terms of strengthening capacities, providing resources (human and resource capacities) for robust systems on data sharing and uptake, for concrete actions and decision making. For this to be achieved, strong leadership is required to steer the region and keep it focused and on-track to deliver on ambitions and meet aspirations. The one clear message from discussions was to ensure the Pacific builds a strong “narrative” that could better empower the Blue Pacific to effectively implement and achieve priorities that are strongly linked to its peoples and prospects.
25. The meeting also discussed gaps, and challenges that needed collective POA work to focus their efforts on and deliver results to achieve the regionally agreed priorities.

26. The need to strengthen and make-appropriate the curriculum in Pacific schools and universities to train future marine professionals (legal, scientific, technical, engineering, maths), who are fit-for-place and purpose was raised. It was suggested that increased collaboration with the media was needed in order to build improved understanding and awareness of Pacific people – based on science, information, and knowledge. These included suggestions to improve Pacific Ocean literacy through Pacific-specific messaging and knowledge.
27. Engagement with CSOs and communities was stressed as being crucial and in particular the need to include them in the decision-making process in accordance with the 2011 Busan Agreement. The role of OPOC to improve partnerships and coordination, to facilitate and broker greater understanding and dialogue between multiple actors and multiple sectors, was highlighted as crucial and necessary.
28. The need to focus on national-level initiatives, in particular, through supporting the development of a ‘*model*’ guidelines for national ocean policy and legislation, was proposed. Discussions also focused on the need for a regional approach to governance and integrated ocean management, acknowledging the more obvious examples of transboundary issues such as climate change & resilience, and fisheries management which require a regional approach, and are currently standing items on the Forum Leaders agenda.
29. There were also discussions on the need to balance conservation and development (sustainable management and use). It was stressed that the two should not be disassociated when pursuing integrated ocean management objectives, and the most appropriate management tools and measures should be used to manage, use and conserve the whole marine space, rather than using fixed percentages of areas to be protected. It was suggested that management decisions should take into account the specific needs and context of a particular area. Marine Spatial Planning was suggested to be a planning process and, or system that guides and informs decision-making for multiple uses – that is, for economic growth while maintaining ecosystem function and biodiversity integrity of coastal and ocean areas. Furthermore, marine protected areas (MPAs) are one of a number of management tools that could be used to ensure the sustainable management, use, and conservation of the ocean and its resources. The goal of 100% management as promoted by some Pacific countries was highlighted as a possible common objective around which the region could rally. Some also saw that this goal could be reconciled with the global objective of 30% protection (MPA) of the World’s Oceans taken together.
30. During the meeting, the POA was encouraged to focus on one or two priorities, which could be determined by regional priorities identified in the Forum Communiqué, given that these are areas of high relevance and priority for PIF members. It was offered that this would help build trust among POA members and demonstrate the need to involve the wide range of stakeholders and interests to advance the region’s

ocean policy priorities and commitments. Among such priorities, existing OPOC/POA programmes on BBNJ coordination and support, and maritime boundaries and sea-level rise were highlighted as specific Leaders taskings of the POC and OPOC and supporting arrangements such as the POA.

31. The CBD post-2020 process was identified as a very important process for countries to engage in. Participants discussed the added value the POA could play in complementing existing regional processes for the CBD process. The meeting also considered suggestions on other issues of importance to the region, such as the ocean-climate nexus, recognizing the opportunity for collaboration across the POA membership; and *'The UN Decade on Ocean Science'*. It was mentioned that apart from capacity building, the Pacific consultations on the UN Decade on Ocean Science held in July 2019 identified the recognition of traditional knowledge as a complement to science, and the need for this to be an area that the Pacific should promote to build capacity, awareness, and utility of other knowledge systems.
32. It was indicated that traditional knowledge as complementary to science is gaining marked recognition at the international level, but even in the region, the emphasis is still on science at the expense of traditional knowledge. It was recommended that OPOC play a role in identifying areas of convergence on knowledge systems. The international decade for ocean science serves as an opportunity to build the narrative of traditional knowledge within the region and understanding its uses alongside modern science. However, caution was raised that many countries do not have safeguards to protect traditional knowledge and owners' interests. The need for engaging with traditional knowledge holders was highlighted to ensure that decisions pertaining to the consideration of traditional knowledge does not undermine the interest of these owners.
33. On capacity building, the meeting recognized the need to implement the seventeen SDGs holistically. It was stressed that an integrated approach was particularly relevant for the ocean as many factors influence the ocean and vice versa, and therefore are not confined only to SDG14.
34. Concerns were raised about the complexity of governance and indicators frameworks currently in place. A suggestion was made for OPOC to work towards institutionalizing mechanisms that would enable a coordinated approach for reporting based on regional priorities and other instruments such as the *'Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development'*. The potential role of OPOC in supporting countries to implement commitments made, in collaboration with POA partners, was highlighted. The added value of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner's advocacy role in attracting partners was raised, and it was suggested that POA members could play a role in supporting the Pacific Ocean Commissioner by contributing to the report on the State of the Pacific Ocean, to Pacific Leaders in July 2020.

35. Continued coordination and cooperation were identified as important to ensure effective, consistent and considered regional action. In particular, discussions focused on the possible role of OPOC working in collaboration both nationally, with CROP, and other regional, international and global partners to support Forum Member preparations towards the important ocean events for 2020, and in particular, the 2nd UN Ocean Conference to be held in Lisbon, Portugal in June 2020; and the Our Ocean Conference to be held in Palau in August 2020.



**5.0 Session 3(a): Regional Ocean Governance
and Integrated Ocean Management –
Dialogue on sustainable use of the Ocean**

5.0 Session 3(a): Regional Ocean Governance and Integrated Ocean Management – Dialogue on sustainable use of the Ocean

Security, Maritime Transport, and Sustainable Marine Tourism

36. The meeting highlighted the importance of the shipping sector in providing significant economic and social services for the Pacific Islands region. However, challenges such as high economic and environmental costs associated with the current state of operations were also highlighted. There was convergence around the fact that improvements in the shipping sector within the region was needed. There were also discussions on the question of what should be the region's priority focus, that is on (i) clean shipping (in particular in terms of low carbon emissions, technologies that could reduce the current carbon footprint from shipping); or, (ii) improving coverage and services across the vast blue continent (within countries and between countries); or, recognition and balancing of both. Discussions also centred on the need to understand the impacts of shipping across all sustainable development pillars (environmental - economic - social) and the need to consider these against the questions of equity and the special case for SIDS given the realities of our increasing vulnerabilities and dependencies. National examples of target-settings as well as retrofitting plans to decrease the ecological footprint of the shipping sector were provided.
37. The meeting also considered whether big cruise ships tourism was a good option for the Pacific or whether the region should move away from it and consider other opportunities more suitable for the region. There was recognition of the various significant associated risks, including environmental, economic, and health risks. However, some POA participants also highlighted the economic benefits generated by this sector. The issue of environmental protection against the development was also raised as an issue to be considered. Concerns were shared of the weak participation of Pacific countries in processes of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), which is not an uncommon trend with engagement in other international organizations' meetings and processes. In that regard, the partnership between the IMO and SPC was considered a strong mechanism to support the recognition of Pacific circumstances in the context of shipping and Members attending the IMO meetings.

38. Concerns were raised about implementing too stringent environmental ambitions, in particular as regards GHG emissions reductions¹, as these could have negative social and economic impacts on remote, maritime transport dependent island communities of the Blue Pacific. Aggressive emission-reduction efforts could damage the interests of some Pacific countries. It was stressed that the use of cleaner and newer vessels is an expensive endeavor and could constitute an economic burden to remote communities as well as Pacific Island countries, many of which already subsidize this sector - to make it viable. The rationale and objective of mitigating the carbon footprint of the shipping sector was questioned. It was indicated that if such efforts were motivated by efficiency and profitability, this would be beneficial. Offsetting current costs and making current shipping operations more viable was highlighted. Participants recognized the progress made and that shipping operators are now moving into improving the efficiency of their operations. If new, efficient and clean technologies can replace old vessels, this could prove positive for the region – but it was also acknowledged that such technology is yet to be made available or that the costs for such a shift remain very high.
39. While the GHG inventory of the shipping sector at the national level was identified as a good tool, it has yet to be embraced and be carried out by many Pacific Island Countries. Such an inventory would provide baseline data – realized as critical and fundamental before any long-term targets should be set. The question of whether to look at the region as-a-whole or whether to focus on the country-level was raised. The meeting also discussed the importance of working in close collaboration with other existing initiatives such as the Pacific NDC Hub to ensure countries can draw on appropriate guidelines for completing their baselines, and from setting realistic targets.
40. In addition to GHG emissions, the impacts of shipping on marine life were highlighted. The UN Decade on Ocean Science was identified as a good opportunity, amongst others, to increase understanding and address issues related to invasive species; climate mitigation in transport; environmental impact of shipping; sustainable tourism around whales and invasive species.
41. The development of regional guidelines for maritime transport could also be considered as a way forward in particular in terms of decreasing environmental impacts. This is taking into account that shipping traffic has increased by 4% in the region, a question raised as to the opportunity to develop a system similar to the “pay for use of air space”. However, current international law and freedom of navigation and free passage cannot allow for such ideas to be put in place.

¹ IMO adopted a mandatory decision in 2019 which states that, “total GHG emissions from international shipping should peak as soon as possible and to reduce the total annual GHG emissions by at least 50% by 2050 compared to 2008”: <http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/PressBriefings/Pages/06GHGinitialstrategy.aspx>

Deep-sea mining impacts versus benefits

42. There was wide and varied discussion on the subject of deep-sea mining (DSM), with some divergent views on the “costs AND benefits” of such activities in-zones, the high-seas and the Area, and the uncertainty around the potential transboundary impacts of DSM exploration and extraction activities.
43. The point was made that the bottom line for mining companies was the exploitation of the mineral resource, and if done right, the impacts would be minimal. Key findings of a study conducted under the 10th EDF SPC DSM project were cited, which concluded that DSM would have a *low impact on tuna fisheries because of the distance with tuna habitats* but identified a potential medium to high impacts for deep-sea snapper fisheries. It was recognized that currently there remain uncertainties due to lack of data and that further scientific research to gather relevant data and information is still needed.
44. Emphasis was placed on the significant potential alternative revenues generated by DSM for Pacific Island countries. It was further stressed that DSM in areas within national jurisdiction was a sovereign right of the Coastal State - in accordance with current international law. The importance of distinguishing between exploration and exploitation was discussed, whereby there should be expectations and opportunities in the exploration phase to support marine scientific research to improve environmental, social and economic information needed to support decision-making and the development of comprehensive social and environmental safeguards and measures.
45. The polluter-pays-principle was highlighted as a possible demonstration of adequate safeguards that provide obligations by the contractor to bear the costs of environmental damage, but some participants stressed the risks that damages could be irreversible, and the precautionary principle should prevail.
46. It was also highlighted that exploration was deemed to be a necessary precursor to exploitation. However, caution was therefore raised on how the transition between exploration and exploitation is decided and on what grounds. Concerns were expressed on the irreversible environmental impacts as well as the social impacts that DSM could generate. There were examples available in the region to call for caution on how some DSM partnerships could have adverse economic and financial impacts on countries, and that careful consideration should be accorded to the rules of engagement of all Parties.

47. A concern was raised to not look at DSM separately from other activities. Issues of cumulative impacts were identified and the need to include their considerations in EIA was stressed. The role of strategic, social and environmental assessments (SEAs) was highlighted. Other issues raised included the need to remain mindful of the inter-connected nature of the ocean and the potential amount of change that DSM could bring environmentally, socially and economically. There was a recognition that a comprehensive risk management assessment of deep-sea mining on other sectors in the Pacific needed to be carried out.
48. A question was raised on the role and place of DSM in the BBNJ discussions and whether DSM was mutually exclusive from BBNJ. The negotiations for a new agreement on BBNJ is expected to conclude in 2020, at which time the relationship between DSM and BBNJ will have more clarity and the governance arrangements for the regime decided.

Multi-sectoral approach to Fisheries

49. Plenary discussions highlighted the limited attention given to coastal fisheries, in the technical papers prepared for the POA, notwithstanding they are significant for Pacific Islands communities and GDPs. Other issues suggested as needing more consideration in the context of fisheries, include the implications of the climate-ocean nexus; fisheries subsidies in the WTO; ongoing Post-Cotonou negotiations; and the need for improved science to support effective responses to changes in the approach to management, use and conservation of the fisheries and other living marine resources (coastal and oceanic).
50. Some participants questioned whether fisheries management in the region adequately implemented scientific recommendations, and in particular conservation measures. In response, it was stressed that fisheries management was a complex and complicated sector, which addresses social and economic objectives, as well as balancing resource management and environmental concerns.
51. POA participants acknowledged that the Pacific Islands region is one of the best-managed tuna fisheries regions in the world, with particular recognition of measures implemented by FFA Members and those of the PNA using the zone-based management tool which is a multi-jurisdictional form of rights-based fisheries management that establishes total limits on catch and/or effort across participating EEZs - allocating shares of the total limits to each participating coastal states EEZ.
52. Participants debated the “30 by 30 initiative”, which aims to protect 30% of the marine environment as MPAs by 2030. It was clarified that the 30x30 initiative is a global initiative and commitment that looks at protecting 30% of the World’s Oceans, and not 30% of each coastal States EEZ and maritime zones. It was further explained that this initiative aims to adopt a new target for ocean protection in the CBD post-2020 framework. Notwithstanding there was a considered view by the meeting that

sustainably managing, using and conserving all of a coastal States maritime zones is more appropriate, and that all management tools (such as MPAs, zone-based management measures, etc.) should be considered within a coordinated, integrated ocean management and planning process (inclusive of multi-stakeholders, multi-sectoral and multi-uses).

53. The meeting also considered that one of the major problems facing the region originates from large (distant water fishing) countries not managing their resources or their fleets. It was recognized that pushing these countries to meet their commitments and cutting back on fishing in the high seas was important. There was wide support by POA participants to focus as-a-region, on improving conservation in the high seas and to push for higher standards. It was also suggested that the region looks at areas adjacent to the Blue Pacific Continent and consider establishing a buffer zone around the 200M outer limits of EEZs, including through protection measures to leverage the global commitment of 30% marine protection by 2030.
54. As tuna is a migratory species, sound management systems within national jurisdictions enable States to demand compatibility on the application of these measures on the high seas. The use of target reference points was identified as a useful tool to support the interests of the Pacific. Participants also highlighted the need to address the welfare and rights of workers in the fisheries sector, especially at-sea on foreign vessels, as well as the importance of considering the long-term, future prospect of fisheries due to pressures outside of the control of the sector (such as climate change).
55. It was emphasized that effective management of the fisheries resource would contribute to strengthening member countries' economies, and the livelihoods and well-being of Blue Pacific communities. However, it was also indicated that reigning in fishing capacity in the region continued to be a struggle; and that some caution be given to staying within ecological limits. The need to factor in resilience to global changes in fishing operations was highlighted and acknowledged. Other impacts such as drifting FADs and ghost nets were highlighted as areas of concern in need of attention.

**6.0 Session 3(b) Regional
ocean governance – Dialogue on
Stewardship of the Ocean**



6.0 Session 3(b) Regional ocean governance – Dialogue on Stewardship of the Ocean

Marine Pollution

56. POA heard that for the past two decades, the biggest marine pollution threats have been from land-based impacts. While it was recommended that appropriate actions be addressed at the national level, it was widely acknowledged that the issue of plastic pollution is a significant problem for the region and requires global efforts to resolve it, given that the provenance of the pollution from plastics in the Pacific Ocean is from Pacific Rim countries. However, some participants were of the view that many opportunities exist for the region to address problems of coastal and marine pollution at national and regional levels.
57. The Plenary was informed of the growing support by Pacific Island countries to launch negotiations for a global treaty to address plastic litter. While recognizing the costs and efforts associated with treaty negotiations, the benefits of pursuing this endeavor in an expeditious manner was highlighted by some participants.
58. It was emphasized that the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs would contribute to resolving the pollution issue, and in particular, SDG 12 *Sustainable Consumption and Production* which provides an important platform and scope. It was recognized that resolving this global issue requires the involvement of all stakeholders, from governments to the private sector, to countries and individual consumers (who can decide to change their consumption behaviours and demand efforts from the industry). POA participants recognized that while some efforts have been made by the industry, there were some who are being aggressive in their efforts to limit changes - arguing of the non-feasibility to phase out plastics.
59. Various projects being conducted in the region to address marine pollution were highlighted, including the SPREP' marine litter plan which includes efforts to reduce single-use plastic. It was stressed that waste treatment systems are often lacking in the islands, in particular in remote and smaller islands. A suggestion was made that issues related to systems of collection and transfer should be enhanced and sub-regional and regional approaches explored and pursued. In saying this some participants were of the view that this issue could be more directly addressed in bilateral meetings with big countries whereby Pacific Leaders should demand concrete commitments and actions.

60. A suggestion was made to develop regional standards that would allow for only “good plastics” to be used in the region. It was stressed that many governments do not have the resources and capacity to deal with plastic pollution. Specific mention was made of a new coalition set-up in Fiji that focuses on how to resolve the plastic pollution issue, by looking into innovative solutions. The proposal to release nuclear waste-water resulting from the Fukushima incident into the Pacific Ocean was highlighted, with POA participants encouraging urgent highest-level dialogue between PIF Leaders and Japan to caution against such action.

Climate-ocean nexus

61. There was recognition of the lack and, or paucity of climate change-related data, including localized data, in the Pacific. Questions raised in the Plenary included the extent of progress on downscaling climate projections in the Pacific; improving knowledge on ENSO conditions, and determining cyclone formation forecasting and predictions in the region. The meeting also raised questions on how this data deficiency can be resolved. Respondents suggested that while progress has been made, the data required to deliver down-scaled local models are still scarce and require resourcing.
62. The meeting also raised concerns over the need to improve applied scientific research and understanding of the impacts of climate change on Pacific islanders’ livelihoods, including in terms of food security (from coastal, marine and oceanic ecosystems). The need to build research capacity in Pacific Islands was reaffirmed and the case made to encourage the provision of more fellowships or scholarships to regional institutions, in preference to international institutions.
63. Participants proposed that several initiatives be considered, including an assessment of the possible relationship between deep-sea mining and climate change impacts, given that the seabed is purported to retain 3 to 4 times the carbon than on land; and, an assessment of the level of emissions from landfills as a contribution to GHG emissions from the Blue Pacific continent, which is often overlooked.
64. The “50 Reefs Initiative” was identified as providing important information for the climate-ocean nexus, given its intention to put nature at the heart of business plans as an effort to demonstrate that adopting an economic approach is feasible. A question on how to support countries in diversifying their renewable energy sources was raised, including how to promote ocean energy, as this type of technology is currently very costly to invest in.
65. Concerns were expressed by some participants that the use of climate finance has moved away from initial priorities. While it was recognized that mitigation of GHG emissions was critical, it was also stressed that adaptation was very important and front-and-centre for SIDS - but adaptation efforts are underfunded, not given the adequate consideration and priority that it deserves. Participants urged that

Adaptation be reaffirmed as a priority at all levels – and require that adaptation actions and implementation be supported at all levels – from local to regional.

66. The meeting was informed that a discussion session on the margin of the UNFCCC COP 25 would look into a dedicated work programme on the ocean with the aim of adopting it at UNFCCC COP 26 in 2020. POA participants commended the Forum Leadership for raising the issue of the ocean-climate nexus in the '*Kainaki II Declaration on Urgent Climate Change Action – Now*' (endorsed in Tuvalu, August 2019). It was acknowledged that Pre-COP discussions would be convened in Costa Rica (October 2019) with the COP25 in Chile (December 2019). As well, given the expanded concept of regional security (inclusive of human security, humanitarian assistance, prioritizing environmental security, and regional cooperation in building resilience to disasters and climate change, the POA Plenary was informed of the first Forum Sub-Committee on Regional Security meeting to be held in Suva in mid-October, 2019.
67. Appreciating the discussions and sharing of experiences, programmes, and projects conducted in the region, the power of collective action was highlighted and the suggestion for a more considered and coordinated approach by the POA through the OPOC to cooperate, coordinate and collaborate in a more considered, collegiate and considered way, together as a collective – going forward.

Geopolitics

68. There was recognition that geopolitics influence has been growing steadily in the region in recent years. It was also suggested that the POA concentrate on economic rather than political terms to which other participants noted that geopolitics have on the contrary strong implications on all of Pacific resources and decisions. The meeting discussed that geopolitics should thus be considered as a possible influencer on all regional priorities and decisions, particularly as it relates to the political aspect as opposed to the economic aspect alone.
69. Notably, the intensifying strategic competition between China and the United States –have re-situated the Pacific and the Pacific Ocean at the very centre of great power rivalries. China's "*Belt and Road Initiative*", the US' "*Indo-Pacific Strategy*", Australia's "*Pacific Step Up*", New Zealand's "*Pacific Reset*" and intensifying engagement from other Pacific-rim powers such as Japan and Taiwan, as well as more distant powers such as Britain and France, are producing "an increasingly crowded and complex region". Such international attention provides an opportunity, and indeed an imperative, for the region to assert and drive the region's own priorities and interests, working collectively as one *Blue Pacific*, and particularly on critical transboundary challenges and issues facing the region.
70. The meeting also considered the spirit of the Blue Pacific speaks to the Pacific finding its own way, on its own terms, through collective action and cooperation;

but at a time when the region and individual Pacific Island states are coming under unprecedented pressure to “take sides” and multilateralism everywhere is waning. The need for consistency in the region’s priorities at all levels was underscored.

71. A few other important issues with regard to the implications of geopolitics on the Blue Pacific was raised including the Pacific Ocean is a more important strategic domain than any time since WWII: the ‘geostrategic value’ of the Blue Pacific is growing; the lines between maritime strategy, maritime security, and the blue economy are likely to become increasingly blurred; the maritime security agenda cannot be divorced from the wider geostrategic context; external actors will likely seek to use the blue economy to pursue their wider strategic interests: fisheries, LSMPAs, DSM, maritime data; and DSM is a special case because rare earth elements are seen by developed states as “strategically important”

Ocean Advocacy Strategy

72. The Plenary considered the report of the workshop on engagement and advocacy, noting the existing advocacy messages on ocean management, use and conservation formally adopted through the PIF (FOC, Foreign Ministers and Leaders – as part of the Forum’s international engagement and advocacy (FIEA) priorities for 2019 and 2020). In addition to this, the meeting also considered proposed messages from the POA that could augment and inform existing FIEA messages. The meeting also discussed the important regional and global events leading up to and during 2020, such as the Our Ocean Conference (Norway October 2019) COP25 (Chile December 2019) 2nd UN Ocean Conference (Portugal June 2020) and the Our Ocean Conference (Palau August 2020) and COP26 (UK, 2020).
73. As a starting point for Plenary discussions on possible areas to be taken forward under the POA, the following issues were highlighted in the workshop report:
 - Climate change, fisheries, pollution, geopolitics, governance, maritime boundaries are priority areas requiring regional attention and focus.
 - Further dialogue between various stakeholders and interests related to Deep-Sea Mining issues and opportunities needs to be facilitated.
 - Further dialogue between multiple stakeholders and interests on good ocean governance, and integrated sustainable ocean management – striking the balance between sustainable development (management and use) and protection/conservation - needs to be facilitated.
 - Alignment and integration of monitoring and reporting against the different regional and global frameworks (within the context of regional instruments such as the PRSD and the FPO) and providing support to members for 2020

in-time for the key global meetings (UNOC, OOC, and COP26) needs to be effectively coordinated to avoid unnecessary reporting burdens on countries and agencies.

- POA partners will need to contribute to the preparation of the 2020 State of the Ocean Report by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner to Pacific Leaders in July 2020.
- Blue Pacific stewardship and high-level advocacy and attention for our ocean issues need to be coordinated and consistent.
- Increasing geopolitical attention and competition in and of the Blue Pacific Continent are underpinning imperatives and considerations that affect and impact all our decisions.
- Continued POA advice and support to Pacific countries in the BBNJ negotiation process is needed, with ongoing coordination and support by and through OPOC.
- Targeted working groups and think tanks should be established with timebound TORs and, coordinated and supported by OPOC - where needed and necessary (for example BBNJ, maritime boundaries, and SLR, approaches to integrated ocean management (for example approach to MSP)



7.0 Way forward

7.0 Way forward

74. The POA requested that a calendar of regional and global events/workshops/meetings be compiled to assist in prioritization. In light of all the issues listed for OPOC and POA to take on, it was suggested to adopt a more focused, strategic and prioritized approach.
75. It was proposed that criteria/tests/methodology be developed to determine the types of issues that would be relevant for the POA to consideration. These include issues that: (i) meet the expectation of Leaders; (ii) align with the POA Charter; (iii) are of regional importance given their complex nature (multiple stakes, interests and/or are cross-cutting); (iv) are addressed through an international/multilateral body/process; (v) issues that allow for diverse groups to engage.
76. In response to the list provided by the workshop on this issue, it was suggested that with support from POA, OPOC should play a role in coordinating regional preparations for the important meetings that are scheduled to be held in 2020. There is strong alignment in terms of POA inputs into the State of the Pacific Ocean report to be prepared by the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, for Leaders 51st Forum meeting in Vanuatu, 2020. The plenary meeting considered these as key issues for POA moving forward.
77. The plenary acknowledged with appreciation the technical papers prepared, as a resource for the POA meeting and agreed that they be used for information purposes, only.
78. The meeting considered the value of establishing a task force or working group taking into account existing regional arrangements to consider approaches to integrated ocean management such as zone-based management/marine spatial planning etc., to ensure a balance between sustainable management, use, and conservation, which could also include traditional knowledge considerations – and which embraces approaches that take into account multiple stakeholders and interests, and consider the multiple uses of marine space. Coordination by OPOC on BBNJ, impacts of sea-level rise on maritime boundaries, ocean-climate nexus and its relationship with the Pacific Resilience Partnership (PRP), which seeks to integrate climate change and disaster risk considerations in resilient development decisions and initiatives for the Pacific), and possible contributions to the various global meetings, including the Our Ocean Conference in Palau in 2020 were specifically referenced.
79. It was emphasized that effectively giving a voice to the Blue Pacific requires improving connections with the Pacific-diaspora such as the PIF Permanent Representatives based at the UN Missions in New York, to ensure that Pacific countries delegates' needs are addressed and there is strong alignment in the advocacy of Pacific priorities and messages. The Pacific Ocean Commissioner requested the OPOC to work with POA members to identify a reference group - representative of member countries and independent experts from POA partners that could support the POC and the OPOC on key initiatives to progress regional ocean policies and priorities.

8.0 Closing session

8.0 Closing session

80. Before concluding, the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, in noting the absence of Sue Taei-Miller from Conservation International due to illness, expressed her sincere gratitude for her continued advocacy, tireless commitment and strong support to advancing Pacific regional ocean policies and their implementation - especially the *Framework for a Pacific Oceanscape* and support to establish the OPOC and to advocate priorities of the Blue Pacific Continent in various fora. The meeting joined her in wishing Ms. Tai best wishes and a quick recovery.

81. Understanding that much remained to be discussed, the Pacific Ocean Commissioner recognized the wealth of information already available from Members, the strong technical support from CROP agencies and other regional and international organizations, and the policy and legal support provided by the PIFS. She concluded the meeting with a call to continue collaborative work to contribute to securing the Blue Pacific Continent and delivering on Pacific Leaders regional priorities and commitments.

End of POA Meeting.

Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner, 4 October 2019



Ratu Sukuna Road, Suva, Fiji

Phone: +679 331 2600 | Fax: +679 322 0266 | Email: info@forumsec.org | Website: www.forumsec.org