



PALAU



PALAU MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement

by

**H.E. MR. STUART BECK
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE REPUBLIC OF PALAU TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

on behalf of

THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM

to

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Agenda Item 75(b)

Sustainable fisheries, including through the 1995 Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and related instruments

11 December 2012

New York

On behalf of the Pacific Island Forum countries represented at the United Nations, I am pleased to support the adoption of these resolutions on Oceans and the Law of the Sea and Sustainable Fisheries.

2012 has been an important year for the oceans. Pacific Island Forum leaders welcomed the strong outcomes from Rio +20 on the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and fisheries, and agreed to use these outcomes to build global consensus on the importance of sustainable development of the Pacific Ocean for the benefit of the peoples of the Pacific during our 2012 Pacific Island Forum on “Large Ocean Island States – the Pacific Challenge”.

We are pleased to see that the international community has reaffirmed the need for urgent collective action to address the state of our oceans and fisheries by incorporating the Rio + 20 commitments into these General Assembly resolutions. The commitments from Rio represent an ambitious beginning, but we need to remain mindful that they are not an outcome in themselves. We must work together to ensure that the effective implementation required to make the commitments meaningful takes place.

We particularly welcome the Rio call to identify and mainstream strategies by 2014 that further assist Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in developing their national capacity to conserve, sustainably manage and realize the benefits of sustainable fisheries. Maximising the benefits of sustainable fisheries resources for SIDS remains a key focus for the Pacific.

Indeed, 2014 will be a very important year for the Pacific as Samoa will host the Third International Conference on SIDS. At this conference, which comes once a generation, SIDS Leaders will meet to consider the sustainable development challenges facing SIDS, including challenges relating to the conservation and sustainable use of marine resources and the preservation of the marine environment. We look forward to the support of all to ensuring its success.

We also welcome the urgent call to address issues relating to the conservation of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), and are encouraged that States agreed on a timeframe in which a decision on whether to develop an international instrument under UNCLOS should be taken. The inter-sessional workshops on BBNJ agreed in the Oceans resolution to be convened in 2013 will allow us to make necessary progress on relevant technical issues.

We are pleased to see that the oceans resolution recognises climate change impacts on the oceans, and in this context we welcome the decision to discuss ocean acidification as a UNICPOLOS topic in 2013. We were disappointed that it was not possible to also agree on a UNICPOLOS topic relating to Rio follow-up on oceans, and remind States that as the international community takes the Rio outcomes forward, oceans need to be fully considered and explored as part of the post-2015 development agenda and Sustainable Development Goal processes.

We welcome the oceans resolution's support for the current assessment phase of the Regular Process. Pacific States are working together to contribute to the assessment, and Australia will host a regional workshop for South West Pacific States in February 2013. We encourage all States to participate actively to ensure that maximum progress is made in advance of the 2014 deadline for this phase of the assessment process.

Before concluding, Mr. President, Palau wishes to associate itself with the statement (to be) delivered by the Permanent Representative of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States. We also wish to make a few remarks in our national capacity.

Mr. President,

Palau's constitution obliges the government to take positive action to conserve a beautiful, healthful, and resourceful natural environment. This obligation finds its origin in Palau's ancient culture and tradition, and is one to which Palau's leaders remain committed. It is a testament to

their stewardship of Palau's marine environment that UNESCO designated Palau's Rock Islands as a natural and cultural world heritage site and the World Future Council awarded Palau's Protected Areas Network and Shark Sanctuary 2012's only World Future Policy gold prizes.

However, we cannot act alone. For our domestic efforts to be effective, the world as a whole must take action to ensure a healthy, sustainable ocean. That is why Palau has so actively championed three straightforward fisheries principles: global fisheries should be fair, global fisheries should be sustainable, and global fisheries should be accountable. More concretely, it is why we have advocated the end of bottom trawling, shark finning, and the use of other unsustainable fishing practices. Palau is pleased that this year's resolutions incorporate language on equity for developing coastal states and welcome shark sanctuaries.

We also look forward to the crafting of a new set of Sustainable Development Goals in the coming year. Palau has long considered that a healthy environment is the key to our sustainable development. The SDGs give us a further opportunity to ensure that oceans are part of the global sustainable development agenda going forward. To that end, we will work with others on the Open-Ended Working Group on Sustainable Development to craft a sustainable development goal on healthy and productive oceans.

Finally, Mr. President,

As I speak today, Palau remains in a state of emergency brought about by Typhoon Bopha, the first typhoon in Palau's history.

Barely a month after Hurricane Sandy bombarded New York, Bopha has caused immense damage and has displaced more than two hundred Palauan families. But we are fortunate. On course for our most populous centers, typhoon Bopha veered south at the last minute, avoiding what would have been certain devastation. Our hearts and prayers are with those who bore Bopha's full force, particularly our friends in the Philippines, where at least 600 people are dead and countless others are missing.

Typhoon Bopha is a terrible reminder of the fragility of our relationship with the oceans. Ocean warming, acidification, and sea level rise affect us all. No one is immune. The world's efforts reflected in today's resolutions and in the creation of the SDGs will be for naught if we do not deal urgently and effectively with the causes of climate change.