



**SPREP**  
Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme



**AUCKLAND  
INSTITUTE  
OF STUDIES**  
NEW ZEALAND

# Whales in a Changing Ocean

NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA • 4–6 APRIL 2017



**CET LAW**



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## Acknowledgement

The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) acknowledges with sincere gratitude, the generous contributions and support for the Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference from the following partners:

- The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga
- The Auckland Institute of Studies
- The Government of Sweden
- The Government of New Zealand
- The Government of Australia
- Okeanos Foundation for the Sea
- Integre
- European Union
- Pacific Community
- Fonds Pacifique
- Digicel
- Deep Blue Diving Tonga
- Animal Welfare Institute
- Blue Climate Solutions
- Cet Law
- Humane Society International
- International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)
- Pattillo
- South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)
- South Pacific Whale Research Consortium (SPWRC)
- Tanoa International Dateline
- Vavau Environmental Protection Agency (VEPA)
- World Cetacean Alliance (WCA)

SPREP would also like to extend its sincere appreciation to the Government and people of the Kingdom of Tonga for the generous hospitality extended to all of the conference participants.

## Glossary of Acronyms

AIS	Auckland Institute of Studies
AUT	Auckland University of Technology
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
IFAW	International Fund for Animal Welfare
IMMA	Important Marine Mammal Area
IUCN	International Union for Conservation Network
IWC	International Whaling Commission
MARPOL	International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
PACPOL	Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL) Strategy and Work Plans: 2015-2020
PICT	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
SPC	Pacific Community
SPTO	South Pacific Tourism Organisation
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
SPWRC	South Pacific Whale Research Consortium
WCA	World Cetacean Alliance

## Summary of Proceedings

## Annexes

## Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference: Conference Outcomes

### Outcomes

1. Commitment to adopt and sign the Pacific Island Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/2017.
2. Agreement to a voluntary commitment, for the UN Oceans conference, informed by the Whales in a Changing Ocean.
3. Government of the Kingdom of Tonga's announcement of a whale sanctuary in their waters.
4. Commitment for technical and scientific input to SPREP's Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2018-2023.

### Conference Working Group Recommendations

Whale Watching Working Group	
Vision	A world-leading, sustainable whale and dolphin based tourism industry that respects and contributes to conservation, local island cultures and economies.
Recommendation	To establish, by June 2019, an annual whale celebration event across the Pacific that becomes a focal point for education and promoting best practice.
Science Research Working Group	
Recommendation	To, by December 2020, establish a validated inventory of whale and dolphin species, genetic distinctiveness and habitat use for each Pacific island country and territory of the SPREP region to improve understanding of ecological roles, economic and cultural values and better inform management.
Emerging Threats Working Group	
Statement	<b>Recognising:</b> our respect for whales as ancestors with inherent rights to the basic need for a species to live and thrive.
	<b>Noting:</b> Pacific island countries and territories' obligations to implement the regional Oceans Declaration and the need for adequate resources to implement national oceans policy and good governance to address threats to cetaceans and their habitats.
Recommendation	That Pacific island countries and territories', by 2022, enact protected areas to prevent the disturbance of marine mammals mindful of national targets, based on science and using precautionary approaches, and implement regional and national cetacean action plans.

## Voluntary Commitment: Protecting, conserving and restoring whale populations in the Pacific islands

- Title of commitment

Protecting, conserving and restoring whale populations in the Pacific islands

- A list of all the organisations and entities including us that are involved. For each partner you must include in brackets, the entity type for which a range has been provided on the form.

### **Lead entities:**

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Intergovernmental Organisation)  
Government of Tonga  
SPTO

### **Other Organisations:**

Governments of Tonga, Samoa and TBC (Participants at Whales in a Changing Ocean conference)  
UNEP  
Non-governmental participants at Whales in a Changing Ocean conference

- Beneficiary countries (this is optional)

SPREP Pacific Island Countries and Territories

- Other beneficiaries

Local communities involved in whale-watching operations

- Up to 500 words that describe the commitment (objectives, implementation methodologies, follow-up mechanisms, governance etc)

### *Goal:*

A partnership between SPREP, Pacific island governments, IGOs, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the private sector to promote the conservation of whales in the Pacific islands region to restore depleted whale populations, improve the livelihoods of Pacific islands people, and combat marine debris and other emerging threats.

### *Rationale:*

The populations of large whales in the Pacific islands were severely depleted by commercial whaling operations last century. Although populations are slowly recovering, they are now under stress from a number of emerging threats, including:

- Ingestion of or entanglement in marine debris
- Noise, including from low-frequency active sonars, seismic surveys
- By-catch in fishing operations and both active and discarded fishing gear
- Climate change

- Poorly-managed whale-watching operations

The Pacific islands is an acknowledged global leader in the establishment of whale sanctuaries, with over 12 million sq km of Pacific islands' EEZs designated as whale sanctuaries. This commitment will bring together new levels of commitment by countries and new partnerships to drive the conservation of whales in the region through a five-year management plan that will maximise the level of protection available to whales across over 10% of the planet's oceans.

*Objectives:*

- Improved global awareness of the Pacific islands' achievements in establishing whale sanctuaries over vast areas of ocean;
- Increased collaboration between countries and stakeholders to exchange traditional knowledge, lessons learned and scientific information on the conservation of whales in the Pacific islands;
- Commit more resources towards better monitoring of the status and trends of whale populations in the Pacific islands;
- Promote best practice whale-watching and dolphin-watching and whale-based and dolphin-based tourism;
- Prohibit the discharge or dumping of fishing gear and other sources of marine debris into the ocean in the Pacific islands, including from land-based sources
- Promote research into the impacts of climate change on whale populations in the Pacific islands;
- Generate new funding opportunities and commitments to support the conservation of whales in the Pacific islands.

*Implementation Methodologies and Governance:*

Implementing entity: SPREP, responsible for project management.

Executing entity: UN Environment (GEF accredited), responsible for funding dispersal and M&E.

Oversight body: A board, co-chaired by [SPREP and UN Environment], with membership from all partners, to review implementation and provide strategic guidance.

- **Ocean basins targeted by the commitment**

South and North Pacific Oceans

- **List, at minimum one with a maximum of 4, tangible time based deliverables (you must enter a month and year also)**

Adoption and implementation by countries and territories of the Pacific islands of a comprehensive Whale and Dolphin Action Plan to guide the activities of individual countries and territories (adoption by July 2018, implementation by September 2020).

Development of a regional protocol for the training of operators and guides in best-practice whale-watching and dolphin-watching (by July 2019).

Introduction by the appropriate authorities of new measures to prohibit the discharge or dumping of fishing gear and other sources of marine debris into the ocean in the Pacific islands, including from land-based sources (by December 2019).

- The type of resources mobilised for this – you can choose from financing in USD, in-kind contribution, other to be specified and staff/technical expertise. You must also give a description of the resource.

In-kind contribution by stakeholders, including technical support and assistance, staff and technical support from SPREP and other regional and global entities, financial support from a variety of potential sources

- A start and end date for the voluntary contribution

Start: September 2017

End: September 2020

- Website for further information

*www.sprep.org*

- Select which of the 16 remaining SDG's this commitment is linked to

SDG 3 Good health and wellbeing (survival of iconic marine species)

SDG 4 Quality education on the importance of protecting fragile ecosystems

SDG 10 Equal rights (local/minority ownership or leadership of management)

SDG 12 Responsible use of living marine resources

SDG 13 Climate change

- An image to accompany it

To be provided

- You must select which of the below SDG14 targets are covered by the commitment:

14.1

14.2

14.5

14.7

14.a

14.b

14.c

(Version as at 9 April, 2017)



## Pacific Islands Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/17



We, the undersigned Ministers and government officials from Pacific Islands and Territories gathered at the Whales in a Changing Ocean conference held in Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, 4-6 April 2017, to celebrate the Year of the Whale in the Pacific Islands and Territories:

**CONSCIOUS** of the deep cultural relationship, including traditional knowledge, between whales and Pacific peoples;

**RECALLING** that many species of large whales that overwinter in Pacific islands breeding grounds were reduced to near-extinction by industrial whaling fleets in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries;

**AWARE** that some populations of these species are now recovering in numbers, thanks to the global moratorium on commercial whaling imposed and maintained by the International Whaling Commission;

**GRATEFUL** that many Pacific island countries and territories have established legislation, whale sanctuaries, and other commitments which add to the regional protection of whales;

**NOTING** that for many Pacific island countries and territories, the presence of whales in their waters is an important cultural resource, and that well-managed whale-watching activities can promote sustainable economic benefits;

**AWARE** also that recovering populations of whales in the Pacific island countries and territories are now at risk from an emerging range of new threats, including climate change, entanglement in marine debris, by-catch in fishing operations, noise and pollution;

**ENDORISING** the Year of the Whale theme that whales are living sentinels that reflect and contribute to the health of our oceans;

**GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGING** the generous hospitality of the Government of Tonga and the excellent arrangements provided to host the Whales in a Changing Ocean conference;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the contributions of regional and international agencies, IGOs, NGOs, private sector and others to promote the recovery of whale populations;

### **NOW THEREFORE**

**RECOGNISE** that lost and abandoned fishing gear is one of the most harmful forms of marine debris for whales, and that accelerated action to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution is needed;

**COMMEND** SPREP's commitment to the production of a Whale and Dolphin Action Plan to provide a framework for conservation activities in the Pacific islands region 2018-2023;

**REQUEST** the experts at the Whales in a Changing Ocean conference to work with SPREP to develop a draft Whale and Dolphin Action Plan for their review and endorsement at the SPREP Annual Meeting in September 2017;

**REQUEST** SPREP to engage with Pacific islands and territories and others to identify key capacity development needs for the conservation of whales, for consideration in the 2018-2023 Whale and Dolphin Action Plan;

**COMMIT** our governments to collaborations with other Pacific islands and territories to provide a secure future for whales in the Pacific islands region;

**WELCOME** the engagement and contribution of all stakeholders in this endeavour, including IGOs, NGOs, academia, the private sector, civil society and local communities;

**WELCOME** new partnerships including multilateral organisations, to implement voluntary commitments by Pacific islands and territories to meet the aspirations of this Declaration.

This Declaration will remain open for signature until 31 December 2017



## Whales in a Changing Ocean: Conference Programme

### Day 1

		Presentation
	Master of Ceremony	<b>Paula Ma'u</b> CEO, MEIDECC
8:30	Seating of guests and participants	
9:00	Opening prayer	<b>Rev. Tevita Ngungutau Tapueluelu Faifekau</b> FWC of Tonga, Fasi-moe-afi
9:10	Welcome	
9:20	Keynote address	<b>Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni</b> Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga
9:30	Choir item	<b>Tupou Tertiary Institute</b>
9:35	Vote of thanks	<b>Hon. Semisi Sika</b> Minister for Tourism
9:40	Vote of thanks	<b>Kosi Latu</b> Director General, SPREP
9:45	Benediction	<b>Rev. Tevita Ngungutau Tapueluelu Faifekau</b> FWC of Tonga, Fasi-moe-afi
9:45	<b>SPTO-SPONSORED MORNING TEA</b> <b>Photo session</b>	
10:15	<b>Kosi Latu</b> Director-General, SPREP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPREP's Year of the Whale and the significance of this conference</li> <li>• SPREP's role and the Marine Species Programme</li> </ul>
		Theme
10:40	Opening comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministers and representatives</li> <li>• IGOs</li> <li>• NGOs, community leaders and industry</li> </ul>	<b>Opening comments and conference expectations</b>
12:30	<b>LUNCH</b>	

1:30	Keynote speaker – <b>Nick Gales</b>	<b>Whales in the 21<sup>st</sup> century</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why whales touch us all and how their conservation has been one of the world’s great conservation stories</li><li>• Why whale sanctuaries are important</li><li>• How the participants can feed into future regional/national planning/action</li></ul>
2:00	Keynote speaker <b>Scott Baker</b>	<b>Status and trends of whales and dolphins in Oceania</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Historical hunting, status, genetic relationships, trends</li></ul>
2:30	<b>Fiafia Rex</b> (Niue)	<b>Pacific island perspectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What whales mean to the people and economies of Niue</li></ul>
2:40	<b>Tiare Holm</b> (Palau)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What whales mean to the people and economies of Palau</li></ul>
2:50	<b>Aline Schaffar</b> (New Caledonia)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearly lost them once, let’s not go there again</li><li>• Why whale sanctuaries are important</li></ul>
<b>3:00</b>	<b>AFTERNOON TEA</b>		
3:15	<b>Conference commissioning</b>		<p>Convenor: Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Key emerging threats</li><li>• Opportunities for collaborations (including with the IWC and other international conventions)</li><li>• Conservation management plans (including SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan)</li><li>• Whale sanctuaries</li></ul> <p>Implementing the goals of Year of the Whale</p>
3.30	Ministers to meet to confirm the direction and the commission and focus for the Conference		
	Conference participants to work on the process and approach required for a successful conference		
5:15	Ministers and other participants share core themes and focus for the declaration and the challenge for the conference		
6:00	<b>Session close</b>		
7:00	RECEPTION/DINNER HOSTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA		

**Day 2: Building a deeper understanding of threats and opportunities**

		Theme	Presentation
9:00 9:05	<b>Opening for the day</b> <b>Introduction of the theme convenors</b>	<b>Welcome back and process for the day</b>	<b>Hon. Deputy Prime Minister</b> <b>Announce and adopt Declaration in plenary</b>
9:25	<b>Keynotes:</b> <b>International linkages</b>	<b>David Mattila</b> (IWC Secretariat)	The role of the International Whaling Commission in facilitating the global conservation of whales
9:50		<b>Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara</b> (IUCN Marine Mammals Protected Areas Task Force)	The role of Important Marine Mammal Areas in the Pacific Islands
10:20	Participant questions and comments		
10:40	MORNING TEA		
11:00	<b>Threats and opportunities - Whales in a Changing Ocean</b>		
	<b>Room 1</b>	<b>Room 2</b>	<b>Room 3</b>
11:00	<b>Erich Hoyt</b> The Global Status and True Value of Whale watching	<b>David Mattila</b> Entanglement and by-catch in fisheries	<b>Angela Martin</b> Whales and climate change
11:30	<b>Mark Orams</b> Economic value of whalewatching in Vava’u	<b>Dave Paton</b> Known and potential impacts of deep sea mining and oil/gas exploration	<b>Anton van Helden</b> Historical and cultural values of whales
12:00	Reflections and insights summary session		
12:30	LUNCH <b>Side event: Aline Schaffar of the Pew Charitable Trusts presenting on the artists' exhibition 'Des baleines et des hommes' at the Tjibaou Gallery in Noumea</b>		
	Theme		Presentation
1:30	Reminder of process for solution building		
1:40	Theme Briefing Plenary		1. <b>Whale-watching – what is the best way forward?</b> <i>Co-conveners: Michael Lueck and Mark Orams</i> 2. <b>Collaborations - future scientific research/conservation measures addressing emerging issues/threats</b> <i>Convener: Scott Baker</i>

		3. <b>Addressing emerging threats – what tools and legal frameworks are needed for integrated management. What are the gaps?</b> <b>Individual/industry/national/regional actions required</b> <i>Co-conveners: Natalie Barefoot and Tiare Holm</i>
1:55	Participants move to the rooms to start each theme	
		<b>Theme</b>
2:00	<b>Defining the critical issues and opportunities</b>	<b>Each Theme:</b> 1. Whale watching 2. Scientific Research 3. Addressing emerging threats – legal frameworks
3:00	AFTERNOON TEA	
3:25	<b>Developing action, responses and proposals for action</b>	<b>Each Theme:</b> 1. Whale watching 2. Scientific Research 3. Addressing emerging threats – legal frameworks
5:00	<b>Progress report back conversation and networking</b> <b>Plenary</b>	
6:30-7:30	<b>FILM NIGHT - Tanoa Conference Room</b> Humpbacks in 3D and other surprises	

### Day 3: Developing reports and proposals for action

		Theme	Presentation
9:00	Opening for the day Welcome back	Welcome back and process for the day	
9:15	Developing action, responses and proposals for action	Each Theme: 1. Whale watching 2. Scientific Research 3. Addressing emerging threats – legal frameworks	
10:00	Progress presentations from each theme		Poster presentations from each theme to enable all participants to see the themes
10:30	MORNING TEA		
10:50	Ministers and representatives		Ministers and government representatives will work together to discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insights from the conference</li><li>• Discussion of potential proposals to the United Nations Oceans Conference</li><li>• Discussion of future collaborations on the conservation of whales in the region, as a precursor to the review of SPREP’s marine species programme</li></ul>
11:30	Ministers and representatives	Plenary	Feedback from the Ministers and representatives meeting and the proposed actions or agreements
12:00	Insights and reflections from the conference		Conference facilitated session to identify the key take outs Declaration signing session 3 – 4 key messages
12:30	Closing Comments		
1:00	Final comments Formal close	Kosi Latu, Director General summing up Hon. Minister of Fisheries, Government of Tonga	
6:00	FINAL FUNCTION HOSTED BY SPREP - TANOA		

## Working Group Reports

**Whale watching Working Group:** Developing responses and proposals for action

**Convenors:** Mark Orams and Michael Luek

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Lesieli Tu'ivai, MEDICC; Ms. Teisa Tupou, Ministry of Tourism, Government of the Kingdom of Tonga

Working Group Presentation to Plenary including one priority recommendation:	
<b>Vision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A world leading, sustainable whale and dolphin based tourism industry that respects and contributes to conservation, local island cultures and economies.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish, by June 2019, an annual whale celebration event across the Pacific that becomes a focal point for education and promoting best practice.</li> </ul>

Best practice examples	
<b>1.</b> Importance of whale watching experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help develop and improve regulations to be more appropriate to the industry.</li> <li>• Sense of stewardship.</li> <li>• Able to read and understand whale behaviour.</li> <li>• Opportunities to see how whale behaviour changes over time.</li> <li>• Manage the expectations of guests.</li> <li>• Assist with science.</li> <li>• More experience provides opportunities to learn how to manage the responsibility and safety of risks.</li> <li>• Educate others.</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b> Strong education programme for the clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance appreciation of the experience of whale watching.</li> <li>• Meeting client expectations</li> <li>• Importance of person delivering the education programme being trained and qualified.</li> <li>• Importance of training and refresher courses.</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b> Length of engagement	
<b>4.</b> Sharing and collaboration of information between operators ( <i>as well as scientists and regulators</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More operational</li> </ul>



5. Move from voluntarily guidelines to legal framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition from competition to collaboration.</li> <li>• Work together for the safety of whales.</li> </ul>
6. Reduce environmental impacts ( <i>emissions, noise</i> )	
<b>What are the most pressing issues?</b>	
1. Scale and growth ( <i>number of licensed operators/ unlicensed operators</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of licensed operators.</li> <li>• Number of unlicensed operators.</li> <li>• Limit licensing.</li> </ul>
2. Enforcement of regulations ( <i>clarity</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need for government support.</li> <li>• Clarity of regulations that are practical.</li> <li>• Enforcement of regulations.</li> <li>• Concrete regulations.</li> </ul>
3. Customers' expectations (photographers / film crews)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managing customers' expectations (photographers, film crew).</li> <li>• Pressure from photographers</li> </ul>
4. Education/ Training for Operators ( <i>operator association/ culture</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education and training needed for operators.</li> </ul>
5. Impacts on Whales ( <i>healthy, viability of whales</i> )	
6. Local vs Others ( <i>operators</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues over foreign and local whale watching operators.</li> <li>• Foreign operators in Tonga without licenses.</li> </ul>
7. Data collection	
8. Staying on Top ( <i>reputation, uniqueness</i> )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Renew Whale Watch Association in Tonga.</li> <li>• Enforcement to create stronger relationships of stakeholders involved.</li> <li>• More engagement from communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Participants brainstorming of priorities and rank</b>	
<b>Priorities identified</b>	<b>Priorities ranked by working group</b>
1. Education for the operators, tourists and guides	1. Education for the operators, tourists and guides
2. Impacts (reduce)	2. Impacts (reduce)
3. Business (viability & success)	3. Cultural aspects
4. Benefits (social, economic, cultural, wider community awareness)	4. Science and experience based management
5. Future proofing	5. Future proofing
6. Cultural aspects	6. Benefits (social, economic, cultural, wider community awareness)

7. Science and experience based management	6. Benefits
<b>The most important to action</b>	
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and viability of whales</li> <li>• Monitoring compliance including government support.</li> <li>• Adaptive management of legislation (using science and experience).</li> <li>• Community awareness.</li> <li>• Government to provide incentives for locals to participate.</li> <li>• Monitoring and compliance of policy and regulations.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach material for broader whale education</li> <li>• Researcher course</li> <li>• Operator association</li> <li>• Develop strategies and outreach material for broader whale education.</li> <li>• Subsidies for locals of Tonga.</li> </ul>
Future Proofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote new technologies to minimise impact on whales (electric boat).</li> <li>• Policy and monitoring compliance.</li> </ul>
<b>The easiest to action</b>	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to ongoing educational programmes.</li> <li>• Create and enhance whale operators and guide training.</li> </ul>
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enforce regulation, legislation and regional co-operation.</li> <li>• Cap number of licenses to minimise adverse impacts to whales.</li> </ul>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of data, information and knowledge between tour operators and scientists.</li> <li>• Tour operators and science - citizen science.</li> </ul>
Education viewed as the highest priority. Feedback gathered from the group on one thing to achieve in the next 5 years linked to the proposed vision for whale watching?	1. Operators to educate and enhance local community awareness.
	2. Pasifika Pre-season Whale Festival
	3. Government support of education implementation
	4. Regional government approach supporting all education issues
	5. Annual event
<b>Follow-up Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review implementation of the SPREP PACPOL 2015/2020</li> </ul>



### Science Research Working Group

**Co-convenors:** Scott Baker and Dave Paton

**Rapporteurs:** Ms. Alice Helu, Ministry of Fisheries; and Ms. Ta'hirih Hokafonu, MEIDECC, Government of the Kingdom of Tonga

Working Group Presentation to Plenary including one priority recommendation:	
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To, by December 2020, establish a validated inventory of whale and dolphin species, genetic distinctiveness and habitat use for each Pacific island country and territory of the SPREP region to improve understanding of ecological roles, economic and cultural values and better inform management.</li> </ul>

Issues identified	
1. Effects of climate change to whale breeding in Tonga	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change model-temperature preference</li> <li>Climate change effects-monitor trends in abundance over time with associated monitoring of environmental variables (eg temperature) and associated fisheries levels (CPU effort).</li> <li>Map current habitat and parameters</li> <li>Map threats</li> <li>Consideration that breeding populations will be affected by changes in feeding grounds.</li> </ul>
2. Role of whales in carbon sequestration and addressing climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Price of carbon.</li> <li>Mass of carbon.</li> <li>Species specific</li> <li>Whales could have a very economic benefit for country that do not have a lot of forest, sea, grass or mangroves</li> <li>Include role of whales in climate mitigation and need for science in nationally determined contributions to the UNFCCC</li> </ul>
3. Knowledge of movement/distribution of marine animals (long term/fine scale)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding right collaborators and funding sources to support work that is logistically challenging. Bringing people together</li> <li>Photo identification and satellite tagging, genetic sampling</li> </ul>
4. Ocean circulation/movements between breeding areas/offshore occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-disciplinary collaboration with other fields of research (eg ocean physics)</li> <li>Use of remote sensing data.</li> <li>Tagging, photo ID</li> </ul>
5. Distribution of inshore dolphins/mortality rates and causes in regions where mortality has been identified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey work</li> <li>Local scientist capacity building</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with local communities/broad scale surveys to assess distribution –aerial surveys –boat based.</li> </ul>
6. Genetic identification of Fiji humpback whale/diversity, distribution and abundance of the presence of different cetacean species present in Fiji waters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Biopsy sampling of humpbacks in Fiji with comparison to Oceania databases</li> <li>• Enhance regional science capacity</li> <li>• Biopsy in Fiji and other key locations.</li> <li>• Capacity building with local scientists.</li> <li>• Capacity building, funds, equipment</li> </ul>
7. Regional abundance estimates/distribution data for all species/Threat distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small cetacean survey methodology.</li> <li>• Marquesas Island as example of alternates</li> <li>• Get access to AIS data at large scale</li> <li>• Establish Pacific wide citizen science to collect this data in coordination with whale watching and communities</li> <li>• Can draw upon traditional and local knowledge to obtain coarse scale data to then plan your fine scale surveys to save the expense in time at sea</li> </ul>
8. Role of whales in ecosystems/food chain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Energy transport by migration whales from Antarctic to tropics whale fall in a reef ecosystem</li> <li>• Ecosystem modeling</li> </ul>
9. Abundance updates for humpback/Connectivity of Oceania to Antarctic with implications for energetics/Abundance estimate for Solomon Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Genotype recapture from breeding grounds to Antarctic.</li> <li>• Vessel surveys of primary hunting range</li> <li>• Abundance updates research surveys-photos, acoustics, boat based, drones/connectivity with Antarctica.</li> <li>• Abundance estimates for Solomon Islands</li> </ul>
10. Genetic analysis of bone and tooth cetacean materials collected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nominate laboratories with technical capacity and resolve CITES transfer issues</li> <li>• Climate change really needs an ecosystem approach</li> <li>• Improve citizen science to expand fluke catalogues</li> </ul>
11. Where does Fiji fit into the South Pacific humpback whale story?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeat shore-based surveys.</li> <li>• Collect biopsy samples of humpbacks in Fiji</li> <li>• Resources for island-specific studies of small cetaceans</li> <li>• Improve fluke and genetic catalogue in Fiji to find out where Fiji fits into humpback whale story.</li> <li>• Photo ID/Genetic analysis/tagging in chesterfield reef</li> </ul>
<b>Summary:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whales role in addressing climate change</li> <li>• Abundance estimates and trends</li> <li>• Connectivity and distribution</li> </ul>
<b>Presentations made to working group to inform the discussions:</b>	

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'The Great Humpback Whale Trail' by Leena Riekkola from the University of Auckland, SPWRC.</li> <li>2. 'How do whales react to environmental changes?' by PhD student from New Caledonia Solene Derville which was a case study from the New Caledonia Humpback population.</li> </ol>	
<b>Issues raised</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Methodology to determine distribution such as satellite imagery to identify species which is not usually the best method. There can still be high discrepancy especially when looking at the whole EEZ. Look into partnership into doing some work like this.</li> <li>2. Countries priorities may differ greatly between whales and dolphins.</li> <li>3. Costs for workshops on M&amp;E are expensive and the responsibility to pay for it can be considered for government, NGO, or patron/partner interested.</li> <li>4. Need for strengthening collaborations.</li> <li>5. New Caledonia reporting observations through internet email and app. Any system is usable but time consuming on data analysis and report analysis.</li> <li>6. How do we deal with connectivity in the ecosystems? What is the turnover in breeding grounds and feeding grounds?</li> </ol>
<b>Summary of priorities: Recognising and endorsing the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek funding and voluntary commitments from each country/territory to establish valid inventory of Species.</li> <li>2. Nominate index species – humpback island associates for trends and abundance, distribution (capture productivity); residents dolphins population [data].</li> <li>3. Promote and coordinate stranding records and improve sample collecting and exchange [data]. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. There is a need to have good tissue database as the pollutant are quite specialized to determine the cause of stranding; but also to determine the trend of stranding.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Regional workshops on species international branding, abundance methods, stranding.</li> <li>5. Explore opportunities for citizen science contribution to WAP.</li> <li>6. Connectivity of women Oceania champions, Antarctica and role in ecosystem/ energy transfer.</li> <li>7. Ecosystem roles of small cetaceans i.e. this can lead to feeding habitats, their targets etc.</li> </ol>

### Emerging Threats Working Group

**Co-convenors:** Tiare Holm and Natalie Barefoot

**Rapporteur:** Mr. Andrew Kautoke, Ministry of Tourism, Government of the Kingdom of Tonga

Working Group Presentation to Plenary including one priority recommendation:	
<b>Statement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recognising:</b> our respect for whales as ancestors with inherent rights to the basic need for a species to live and thrive.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Noting:</b> Pacific island countries and territories' obligations to implement the regional Oceans Declaration and the need for adequate resources to implement national oceans policy and good governance to address threats to cetaceans and their habitats.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• That Pacific island countries and territories', by 2022, enact protected areas to prevent the disturbance of marine mammals mindful of national targets, based on science and using precautionary approaches, and implement regional and national cetacean action plans.</li> </ul>

Looking for human made solutions for preserving whales through addressing key issues linked to threats.		
Goals categories	Opportunities	Issues
1. Impacts (reduce)	1. IWC bycatch	1. Climate Change
2. Education (add value)	2. Blue carbon (whales)	2. Pollution- debris, chemical, noise, heavy metals
3. Culture (respect and distinctiveness)	3. GGI (SGGI)	3. Maritime traffic – noise/ ship strikes
4. Benefits (maximise especially for locals)	4. Local education to understand importance of whales	4. Habitat destruction
5. Research (understanding)	5. Sanctuaries	5. <i>[Unsustainable whale-watching ] to whale watching group</i>
6. Business (viability and success)	6. Raise community awareness	6. Whaling
7. Future proofing (leading not following)	7. Informal agreements/ IGOs and NGOs – information and capacity building	7. Fisheries – entanglement & bycatch
	8. <i>[Data collection by operators]</i>	8. <i>[Knowledge gaps] to science WG</i>
	9. Krill fishing regulations	9. Fake news and misrepresentation of the industry /distribution data for all species/Threat distribution
	10. Industry levy/ tax to support scientific monitoring and enforcement	10. Cumulative impacts of threats
	11. ABNJ - identify areas also important for species	11. Mineral extraction

	<b>12.</b> Develop response plans with multi-level engagement	<b>12.</b> Migration beyond jurisdictions	
	<b>13.</b> Develop regulations and regularly review and enforcement	<b>13.</b> Lack of regulation and enforcement	
	<b>14.</b> Enhance CMS presence in the Pacific	<b>14.</b> Cultural knowledge loss	
	<b>15.</b> Make better use of IWC	<b>15.</b> Invasive species and diseases - * climate change	
		<b>16.</b> Lack of education on whales	
<b>Regional Goals: Group 1</b>			
1.1 Re-establish a point of contact and engagement with CMS			
1.2 Engage IWC on feasibility of formal MoU with SPREP			
1.3 Encourage IWC to engage with CCAMLR on the status of Krill and bycatch that would affect the region			
1.4 SPREP integrate Marine Mammals into their relevant work streams that will impact cetaceans/ marine mammals. E.g. Climate change, waste management, shipping, fisheries			
2.1 Within 5 years each country develops response plans to appropriately respond to marine mammals in distress			
2.2 See action 1.4 at country level			
2.3 In order to achieve Aichi target 11 by 2020 all areas that have been declared cetacean sanctuaries will have adopted management plans			
3.1 Each country develop a whale awareness campaign			
3.2 The country should develop a regional awareness campaign. E.g. Annual whale day			
<b>Regional Goals: Group 2</b>		<b>Action: Group 2</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Pacific region is the leader in industry best practice for whale watching</li><li>Ocean /marine debris is integrated into waste management at SPREP. E.g. No plastic bags/ ban zero - use of plastic (solid waste). – pass over to whale watching group</li><li>Coordinated collection and sharing of data information on the impacts of climate change - migration patterns and other priority emerging threats; food sources; habitation destruction; entanglements/ bycatch.</li></ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Establish a suitable public and easy to use platform for data sharing on threats identified.</li></ul>	
<b>Regional Goals: Group 3</b>			
<b>1. Entanglement</b>	<b>Goal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>By 2022 SPREP hosts a repository of information on whale and dolphin entanglement in the region. Better</li></ul>	<b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>SPREP to establish MOUs with RFMOs, to develop a centralised database to help countries understand the threat</li></ul>	<b>Advantages</b>



	understanding of nature and extent of entanglement in our oceans - first key step to management actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each country to coordinate data sharing access between their fishery, environment and tourism department to better align with the SPREP MOU.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Climate Change</b>	<b>Goal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is better understanding of carbon accounting, its relevance and applicability to our Oceans.</li> </ul>	<b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPREP to facilitate access to experts to assist countries carry out carbon accounting in their oceans</li> </ul>	<b>Advantages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to offset.</li> <li>Monetary value of ocean ecosystems/ stocks Facilitate international negotiations / agreements.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Poorly regulated whale and dolphin watching</b>	<b>Goal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regional collaboration and cooperation on whale and dolphin watching best practice is enhanced</li> </ul>	<b>Action</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish regional organisation/ association of operators for whale and dolphin watching industry</li> </ul> <b>Lead role</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPTO</li> </ul>	<b>Advantages</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easy access to whale watching data</li> <li>Easy access to whale watching industry for data/ guidance from IWC</li> <li>Easy compliance to voluntary standards or accreditation</li> <li>Easier regulation for governments</li> </ul>



## Speeches

*Speeches appear in order of presentation and where they have been made available to the Secretariat.*

**Day 1: Tuesday 4 April 2017**

**SPREP**

**ADDRESS BY KOSI LATU, DIRECTOR GENERAL,  
SPREP, AT THE OPENING SESSION OF**

**WHALES IN A CHANGING OCEAN**

- Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Acting Prime Minister of Tonga
- Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa
- Hon. Kiriau Turepu Minister of Environment of the Cook Islands
- Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Fisheries, Tonga
- Hon Semisi Sika, Minister of Tourism Tonga,
- Members of the Tongan Cabinet
- His Excellency High Commissioner of Australia – Andrew Ford
- Her Excellency the High Commissioner of New Zealand to Tonga - Sarah Walsh
- Rev. Tevita Ngungutau Tapueluelu, FWC of Tonga, Fasi-moe-afi
- Distinguished Representatives and government officials
- Members of the diplomatic corps
- Representatives of NGO's and IGO's
- Ladies and Gentlemen
- Malo e lelei

May I extend warm greetings to you all on behalf of SPREP.

Welcome everybody to this very special conference on Whales in a Changing Ocean and thank you all so much for coming. SPREP is delighted with the attendance here today, and I want to start by sincerely thanking the Government of Tonga for hosting this conference and for all the excellent arrangements that have been made.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank our partners the Government of Tonga and Auckland Institute of Studies, our numerous sponsors and supporters whose generosity has made it possible for SPREP to support the travel of so many of our Members and the impressive number of expert participants. I should especially like to acknowledge the very significant contributions made by the

Governments of Sweden, Australia and New Zealand, the European Union and the Okeanos Foundation.

This meeting has been over a year in the preparation, and I hope that the effort that has been put into its organisation will pay dividends for all of us. After this morning's statements by the Government of Tonga, it is clear to me that we are going to have a very informative and innovative meeting, with significant outcomes for the region. As many of you will know, this is the Year of the Whale in the SPREP region, and we have good reasons to celebrate whales. Whales are awe-inspiring creatures that have had a central place in Pacific islands cultures for centuries and our region is home to over half the species of whales and dolphins on Planet Earth.

But their very size and predictable migrations made the great whales a target for industrialised whaling fleets last century, and over 2 million large whales were killed on their Antarctic feeding grounds, driving the whales that overwintered in the Pacific islands close to extinction. Over 30 years ago, as the global Save The Whale campaign gathered strength, SPREP members were in the forefront of declaring national whale sanctuaries, which now cover over 12 million square kilometres of our region, and this morning we will hear that Tonga will be declaring its waters, which are home to the largest breeding population of humpbacks in our region, a whale sanctuary. Congratulations Tonga!

Whale populations are now slowly recovering, none more so than in Tonga. Since the far-sighted King Tupou IV issued a Royal Decree to halt subsistence whaling in Tonga in 1978, the population of humpback whales breeding in Tongan waters every winter has grown from an estimated 50 or so to over 3,000. It is one of the world's great conservation success stories.

And with the population recovery have come economic opportunities for Tonga and other Pacific island countries in the form of whale-watching. The United Nations has declared 2017 as the Year of Sustainable Tourism, and it is highly appropriate that an important theme of this conference should be developing best practice whale-watching operations in the Pacific islands, and I understand that we have some of the best people in the world here to proffer their advice.

But although most whales are now safe from the harpoon, they now face an array of new emerging threats such as climate change, marine debris and pollution, noise, entanglement and by-catch in fishing gear. A fundamental theme of SPREP's Year of the Whale is that whales are ocean sentinels – because they are long-lived, they become living indicators of the health of our seas. And what happens to whales from living in a polluted ocean will surely soon happen also to Pacific islanders. By looking after our oceans to protect our whales, we also look after ourselves and future generations of both whales and people.

SPREP attempts to provide guidance on the conservation of whales for all our Members through our Whale and Dolphin Action Plan, which is due for renewal this year, to cover the period 2018-2023. This conference will be the starting point for our new plan, and we are looking to all of you – governments, scientists, NGOs, civil society and the private sector – to assist us in this endeavour. Your deliberations over the next two and a half days will provide the framework and the platform for whale conservation in the region over the next 5 years.

Most of you will be aware that this is a big year for oceans on the global stage, with the UN Ocean conference in New York in June, which is co-hosted by Sweden, one of our major sponsors for this meeting, and Fiji. We intend to take the outcomes of this conference to the UN meeting in various ways, most importantly through a Declaration that we hope governments here will sign onto. We also have some other ideas, and you'll hear more about them later.

And we won't be short of entertainment – the Tongan Government will be hosting a reception this evening; there will be a film evening tomorrow night, and SPREP will host a farewell reception on Thursday evening. So, I invite you to work hard, to enjoy yourselves, and to get to know each other. It is my hope that this conference will usher in a new era of collaboration between countries, with the active participation of many of the organisations in the room, to provide a secure future for our Ocean Voyagers, the Pacific whales.

Thank you again Honourable Deputy Prime Minister for your outstanding Tongan hospitality. Thank you

Ministers, officials and participants for coming to Whales in a Changing Ocean and I look forward to meeting you all in the course of the next few days.

[END]

## AUSTRALIA

### Opening Remarks from HE. Mr. Andrew Ford, Australian High Commissioner to Tonga

- Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni
- Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa
- Ministers and officials
- Director General of SPREP
- Members of the diplomatic corps
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Malo e lelei, good morning and welcome.

The Australian Government is very pleased to partner with SPREP and the Government of Tonga in this the "Whales in a Changing Oceans" conference. We were able to provide funding to facilitate the attendance of representatives from Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

We are very grateful to Tonga for hosting this important conference. It provides an excellent opportunity to bring together representatives from Pacific countries to discuss a range of issues of mutual interest including threats to whales, economic benefits of sustainable whale watching and regional co-operation on whale conservation.

Having lived in Tonga for over a year now. It was exciting last year to see whales in the waters around Tonga. Whale watching is one of Tonga's most popular tourist attractions, bringing growth and jobs to the country.

The oceans is vitally important to Tonga, which like all Pacific Island Countries, is surrounded by the vast ocean. Pacific countries rely on the ocean being healthy and whales are fundamental contributors to healthy oceans.

I am delighted that Australia is represented at this conference by Dr. Nick Gales, Australia's Commissioner to the International Whaling

Commission, who will be delivering a keynote address this afternoon.

I wish all of you the best with your discussions in the coming days. I understand that the Conference will result in a declaration and a commitment to greater conservation in our Oceans. I look forward to hearing about the results of the Conference and to meeting some of you in the coming days.

Thank you very much

Malo 'aupito

[END]

## NEW ZEALAND

HE. Ms. Sarah Walsh,  
New Zealand High Commissioner

### Speech notes for "Whales in a Changing Ocean" Conference

- Tongan Deputy Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni
- Deputy Prime Minister, Samoa
- Ministers
- SPREP DG Kosi Latu,
- Rev. Tevita Tapueluelu Faifekau
- Diplomatic colleagues,
- Distinguished guests
- Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa
- Malo e laumalie. Malo e me'a mai.

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this important event. It is a pleasure to be here with you all today.
- The Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference is the highlight of SPREP's Year of the Whale programme.
- It represents a crucial coming-together of people with a passion for our whales, our ocean and our futures.
- I would like to thank the Government of Tonga for their kind hosting of this event, and the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme for their organisation.
- **New Zealand is very proud to be a sponsor of this conference.**

## Whales

- We are here because we share a common concern about the challenges facing our whales.
- Pacific whale populations have now recovered from the verge of extinction.
- However, they are now facing new dangers which once again threaten their existence.
- Today, our Pacific whales are at significant risk from a variety of emerging threats.
- These include climate change, entanglement and marine debris.
- Acknowledging and addressing these threats is crucial as they will ultimately impact on all of us.
- New Zealand is a Pacific Island Nation, and like all island nations, the **ocean and its resources are vital to our way of life.**
- The Pacific region's ocean resources are critical not only from an *environmental* perspective, but also an **economic** perspective.
- **Whale watching**, in particular, presents a unique opportunity for **tourism** and revenue generation for the Pacific region, but it must be managed in a way that does not **compromise their long-term sustainability.**
- Our futures are collectively connected to those of these whales, and this ocean, and our abilities to conserve and protect them.
- Healthy whales and a healthy ocean are clearly in all our interests.

## Coordination

- That is why this conference is so important.
- It presents an opportunity for stakeholders from all paths – from government to civil society – to come together and confront these challenges collaboratively, and with purpose.
- We see taking a precautionary and coordinated approach as critical to how we achieve this.
- It is **essential we harness and share the expertise, experience, and innovation that exist across the region to protect this common resource.**

- Regional coordination is not a new concept for us.
- SPREP's Whales and Dolphin Action Plan and the CMS Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Pacific Island Cetaceans are good examples of how we have committed to work together to protect our cetacean populations.
- New Zealand is proud to have cooperated closely with many of the participating organisations here today across a range of projects in our waters, including research on humpback whales in the Cook Strait, pygmy blue whales in the South Taranaki Bight, and Bryde's whales in the Hauraki Gulf.
- We have also worked with the University of Auckland, in association with the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium, to investigate the feeding habits and migration pathways of New Zealand humpback whales.
- Our experience has demonstrated that **engaging in targeted partnerships is an effective way of achieving meaningful results.**

#### *Announcement*

- Partnerships are important to us and I take the opportunity to announce today that the New Zealand Government will be providing funding for **Niuean NGO Oma Tafua** to conduct humpback whale research in Niue.
- We will be funding a boat charter to allow Oma Tafua to conduct valuable research which can then be compared across the Pacific region, filling data gaps and contributing to greater regional conservation efforts.
- It is this kind of targeted cooperation in the Pacific that makes a practical and immediate difference.

#### *Conclusion*

- Achieving meaningful and lasting outcomes for whales requires dedication and coordination.
- It is up to all of us to leverage opportunities like this conference to come together, have the discussions, examine the opportunities, and address the challenges.

- The more we can do this, the more we will make real, sustainable difference to protecting our Pacific whales.
- Thank you. Malo au'pito.

[END]

#### **TONGA**

**Key note address for the  
Acting Prime Minister of Tonga,  
Hon. Siaosi 'O Sovaleni  
International Conference on Whales in a  
Changing Ocean  
4 April 2017**

#### ***SALUTATION:-***

Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa  
Honourable Ministers  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps  
Director General of SPREP  
Government Representatives  
Rev. Tevita Tapueluelu & Member of Clergies  
Distinguished guests  
Ladies and gentlemen

Malo e lelei and very good morning!

I am indeed honored to officiate this very important event *Whales in a Changing Ocean* this morning.

I would also like to join the Hon Minister for Fisheries, in welcoming you all to the friendly shores of the Kingdom.

For the past 40 years, the Government of Tonga has been in the forefront of a deliberate effort to protect and conserve the whales in the South Pacific.

Of course, whales are at the centre of many Pacific cultures, but [perhaps] none more so than in Tonga. Centuries ago, whales guided our ancestors in their voyaging canoes to landfall, and their regular appearance in our coastal waters to breed and give birth is still a significant event.

Scientists tell us that Tonga is [ONE of ] the most important country in the Pacific islands for humpback whales, *Tofua'a* in Tongan, and the winter home for half of the entire population of

breeding humpback whales between New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

After nearly 80 years of hunting in our islands last century, however, it was clear that whales in Tonga were close to extinction. Since the Royal decree of 1978 by HM King Tupou IV, which banned the hunting of whales in Tongan waters, four years before the global moratorium on commercial whaling by the International Whaling Commission, as DG of SPREP, the Tongan breeding populations have recovered from less than 50 to more than 2000 whales – it is said, this is one of the world's great conservation success stories. The Royal Decree was further supported by the introduction of the Fisheries Act 1989, which called for prohibition of killing of cetacean animals - whales and dolphins, and the enactment of the Whale Watching and Swimming Act in 2009.

Whales are ecologically, culturally and economically important for Tonga and the wider Pacific. Tonga has one of the fastest growing whale watching industries in the world, which is expanding and injecting millions into the Tongan economy each year. However, whales are not saved. Today, they still face many threats, including climate change, bycatch in fisheries, and whaling.

Over the years, Tonga has been working closely with our regional partners, SPREP and SPC, and other international partners, which provides the scientific research and advisory capacity towards the conservation of the cetaceans mammals and their habitats in the Pacific region. In 1982, the Tonga Visitors Bureau, Vava'u Tourism Association and the Tonga Whale Watching Operators Association held our first whale watching workshop hosted by the International Fund for Animal Welfare, also known as IFAW. Subsequent training sessions were conducted since those days. Additionally, a workshop that was held around 2008, funded by New Zealand, co-chaired by the New Zealand High Commissioner, Christine Bogle, and HRH Salote Pilolevu Tuita, where one of the recommendations that came out of this workshop was for the Government of Tonga to consider the declaration of a whale sanctuary.

I would like to congratulate the conference committee for coming up with this most appropriate title for our conference '*Whales in a Changing Ocean*'. It is very appropriate and fitting that we should be reminded of our changing Pacific

ocean, our changing environment and of course our changing climate. I wish you all a successful Conference and hope that you will have a pleasant and enjoyable stay here in the Kingdom.

In observance of the Royal Proclamation of His Majesty King Tupou IV in 1978, I wish to Re-affirm that all Tongan waters is declared a Sanctuary for Whales. The ban against the hunting and killing of whales in Tongan waters remains in force. Additionally, the Kingdom of Tonga will persevere with its commitment to providing sanctuary to, and protection of, whales.

Tu'a 'ofa atu.

[END]

## **SAMOA**

**Statement by the  
Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Minister of Natural Resources and Environment  
for the Government of Samoa**

Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni  
Director General of SPREP  
Honourable Pacific Leaders  
Excellency's  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to express my delegation's deep gratitude to the Government of Tong for hosting the first international conference to promote whale conservation in the Pacific region islands. The hospitality extended to me and my delegation is highly appreciated and for the support provided by the Government of New Zealand, SPREP and its partners.

Last year in April 2016, in Samoa, I was honoured to have taken part in the official launch of the 'Protect the Pacific Whales Campaign', an opportunity for SPREP and all its Members and partners to celebrate these magnificent creatures, raise awareness and their conservation including oceans. I wish to congratulate SPREP and its partners for championing the conservation of our whales in our region.

In 2002, Samoa declared all its waters in our EEZ, a National Marine Sanctuary for Whales, Sharks,

Turtles and Dolphins and further enacted the Marine Wildlife Regulation 2009 to meet our obligations under the relevant MEAs. We have been engaged in a number of regional and international programmes and projects to monitor, conserve and manage the state of our whales and other cetaceans sustainably.

We are all aware, that sustainable use and management of these migratory marine mammals cannot be found without healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas in our region.

Mr. President

I certainly support the similar aspirations and common challenges our Pacific Islands face and the importance of this conference to further define a roadmap for deepening our cooperation and international partnerships.

In considering the objectives of this conference, Samoa is able to give support to the Outcomes Document out of which we can consolidate a strategic position for Voluntary partnership and immediate Call for Action.

On the national commitments, we wish to place great emphasis on the following thematic areas –

**(Theme No. 2) – Collaboration through Scientific research and conservation measures to address emerging issues and threats.**

Examples are:

- Aligning and strengthening existing multi-sectoral programmes and mechanisms;
- Leveraging additional resources to meet national priorities;
- Increasing scientific knowledge and necessary research capacity;
- Invest in data and Information Systems.

**(Theme No. 3) – Addressing emerging issues and threats for integrated coastal and ocean management.**

Examples are:

- Implementation of national policies to control marine pollution and waste from land-based and sea-based activities;
- Impacts of Climate Change;

- Overfishing and Bi-catch fishing operations.

Mr. President

Samoa is ready to build on our existing partnerships with determination that the course of the action we will chart here at the first conference on Whales will be delivered to achieve our priorities and have the opportunity to communicate these at the UN Ocean Conference in New York in June.

Thank you for your attention.

[END]

**COOK ISLANDS**

**Hon. Kiriau Turepu,  
Minister of the Environment  
Government of the Cook Islands**

**Country Update Statement for the  
Whales in a Changing Oceans Conference**

Kia Orana Koutou Katoatoa

Kia Orana Your Excellency, Honourable Siaosi Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga and Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications.

Please allow me, at this time, to convey the sincere appreciation from my Queen's Representative Tom Marsters and the Government and People of the Cook Islands to the Royal Family, Government and People of the Kingdom of Tonga for receiving and hosting us here in Tonga – Kia Orana.

Your Excellency, Honourable Semisi, Fakahau, Minister for Fisheries for Tonga – Kia Orana.

Your Excellency, Honourable Semisi Sika, Minister for Tourism for Tonga – Kia Orana.

Your Excellency, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa – Kia Orana.

Your Excellency, Mr Andrew Ford, Australian High Commissioner – Kia Orana.

Your Excellency, Ms Sarah Walsh, New Zealand High Commissioner – Kia Orana.

Members of the Diplomatic Corps – Kia Orana.

Mr Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP and your team, Kia Orana.



Distinguished country delegates and representatives, expert speakers and presenters, Ladies and Gentlemen

Kia Orana.

It gives me great pleasure to be here in the Kingdom of Tonga at this very first Whales in a Changing Ocean conference and I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the generous hospitality provided by our hosts, the Government and people of Tonga.

I would also like to acknowledge the support provided by governments of Sweden, New Zealand and Australia, and partners to make this conference happen.

I am happy to be here at this venue with fellow ministers and government officials to discuss, promote and plan the current and future management of our ocean giants, the Whale or in the Cook Islands – Toora.

The Cook Islands recognizes the value and importance that these majestic creatures play in our oceans, environment, economy and more importantly, our culture. Further to this, the Cook Islands recognizes and acknowledges that their populations have dramatically declined due to overharvesting and human pressures applied on their breeding, migration and feeding grounds and habitats.

The Cook Islands has recorded 26 species of Cetacean in its waters, this number has increased since 2007, where the number was 21, due to the research and efforts of government and in particular Ms Nan Hauser of the Cook Islands Whale Research Center. Nan has been the cornerstone of Cook Islands Whale Research, her tireless efforts to discover and unwavering commitment to whales and dolphins, in particular, Cook Island whales and dolphins has underpinned our efforts to safeguard these sentinels of the sea.

Our most well-known species is, of course, the Endangered Humpback Whale. The Humpback Whale arrives in winter, from June to October, a use the Cook Islands as a corridor to migrate to true breeding ground, most likely in Tonga. However we have recorded calving occurring in our waters

which does make these individuals special to Cook Island people.

A unique characteristic of the Cook Islands Humpback population is that we have observed almost zero fidelity! In 17 years of research, we have only seen 2 whales return to the Cook Islands, all other whales recorded have been new visitors. This is extremely unusual since humpbacks tend to return to the same area during their lifetime.

To bring effect to the recognition of the value of whales in the Cook Islands and in alignment with outcomes of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, the Cook Islands, in 2001, declared its entire Exclusive Economic Zone, an area of almost 2 million square kilometers as a Sanctuary for Whales.

Through this declaration, the Cook Islands commits to;

- Promotion of non-lethal scientific research on whales;
- Collaboration for information exchange, education and awareness initiatives; and
- Best practice management for the interactions with whales in our waters

Since the declaration civil society and government collaborated to establish rules that were published and enforced through consent and cooperation. These measures are no longer sufficient and we now look to formalise the Whale Sanctuary declaration. Through a consultative legislative process, it is my hope that the Cook Islands will demonstrate once again its innovation and leadership by making the waters of the Cook Islands a true sanctuary, a unique place in the South Pacific where whales can thrive in harmony with human activity.

The Cook Islands are currently on a pathway to develop the necessary legislative framework to formalize the declaration and regulate human interactions with whales. Legislation will maintain the spirit and intentions of our 2001 Declaration and look to managing interactions from unlawful take, fisheries and strandings, to name a few.

I am extremely pleased to announce, here at this Conference, that Cook Islands has also declared its entire EEZ as a Marae Moana – Marine Park. The Cook Islands is committed to raising to standards on ocean stewardship and management of its natural resources. As part of this commitment, the Cook Islands has just recently declared that all waters within 50 nautical miles of our islands as protected from commercial fishing, this equates to 16.25% of our EEZ. It is anticipated that through this commitment, the Cook Islands reduces the interactions between the commercial fishing sector and whales in our waters. This decision aligns with an existing commitment from the Cook Islands to also exclude any possible future sea bed mineral activities from within 50 nautical miles of and island.

In the lead up to the United Nations Conference on Oceans, graciously co-hosted by the Governments of Sweden and Fiji, I believe this Whales in a Changing Ocean conference is timely and relevant to our steps towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, Development Goal 14.

I look forward to sharing the Cook Islands experiences and learning from countries around the table on how best we can, together, demonstrate our cultural and national stewardship of our Moana Nui o Kiva and the bounty it provides.

Kia Orana and Kia Manuia

[END]

## TUVALU

**Statement Delivered by  
The Acting Secretary to Government of Tuvalu,  
Mr Fakavae Taomia  
At the Whales in a Changing Ocean  
Nukualofa, Tonga, 4-6 April, 2017**

Acting Prime Minister of Tonga  
Excellency Ministers from the region  
Distinguished members of Academia and  
researchers, Representatives from the  
private sector and NGOs  
Distinguished Delegates  
Friends

I bring Greetings and best wishes from Tuvalu.

First, it is with great honour that I acknowledge the kind invitation of the Director of SPREP in this historic international conference on Whales in a Changing Ocean.

Allow me to congratulate His Majesty, the Government and people of Tonga for the declaring all Tongan waters as a whale sanctuary. Let me also extend our sincere gratitude to the Government and the people of Tonga for their warm hospitality in hosting us.

Special recognition to the Government of Australia for funding my attendance to this meeting.

The Ocean has been one the main sources of our livelihoods, identity, traditions in all the Pacific including my country Tuvalu since the creation of our islands.

As custodian of the Pacific Ocean it is our duty to continue looking after its health to ensure that it continues to provide for our future generation.

In the last PSIDS PrepCom Conference in March this year in Fiji. Leaders reaffirmed the need to improve Ocean governance through strengthening existing instruments and where necessary, the development of comprehensive frameworks to sustainably manage, conserve and develop our Ocean and its resources across all maritime zones.

The MDGs, SDGs, the SAMOA Pathway, Pacific Oceanscape, our Leaders' Ocean declarations in 2015 and 2016 and many others, are principal platforms we could all be proud of. Because they are the fruits of our coming and standing together as a global community. Therefore it is very important in this conference that we acknowledge the current regional efforts to protect and minimize risks on the welfare of whales from fishing practices.

However, Tuvalu would like to emphasise that it is important that we maintain the context and continue the momentum of these platforms in our deliberations this week.

In Tuvalu, Oceans and seas is one of the twelve prominent strategic areas in our **Te Kakeega III**

**(National Strategy for Sustainable Development)** where the goal is to conserve, oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Tuvalu has committed to conserve at least 10% of coastal and marine resources, consistent with international law, based on the best scientific evidence. Furthermore under our TKIII we are committed to enhance the conservation and sustainable use of ocean resources by implementing international laws as in UNCLOS. I am glad to inform that Tuvalu has implemented new legislation focusing on conservation and management measure from WCPFC and PNA for the protection of whale sharks from purse seine fishing operations by prohibiting purse seine vessels fishing in our EEZ from conducting sets on or around whale sharks through the third arrangement implementing the PNA setting forth additional terms and conditions of access to the fisheries zones of the parties. Additionally there is also Conservation and Management Measure to address impact of purse seine fishing activity on cetaceans (marine mammals). This CMM prohibit states flagged vessels from setting a purse seine net on a school of tuna associated with a cetacean in the high seas and exclusive economic zones of the Convention Area, if the animal is sighted prior to commencement of the set. This CMM came into force in 2013 within the Commission Area. Our current relevant law, the Marine Resources Act, does not specifically reflect this CMM, however, we are in the process of reviewing this law. The review will reflect the responsibility of Tuvalu as a member of the Commission in implementing this CMM within our EEZ Tuvalu in addressing the issues on Oceans Tuvalu has consistently called for :

- a global ban on use of micro-beads and micro plastics. As well as encourage the development of an international agreement for environment and safety standards for all offshore drilling and mining on or in the continental shelf.
- the international community at large to commit to establishing marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Work is already under way under the auspices of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to develop an International Legally Binding Agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity of areas beyond the

national jurisdiction. Within these discussions there has been a variety of views with respect to the establishment of marine protected areas, particularly over what marine protected areas should cover. From our perspective they should be clearly defined areas to achieve the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem services and other cultural values.

- On Target 14.4, we call on all nations to ratify the legally binding Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (PSMA). The PSMA Agreement has yet to enter into force **as there are insufficient ratifications (needs 25 States). It is an important Agreement to monitor and report on IUU fishing. We in the Pacific are the custodians of a huge area of ocean which is heavily fished by distant water fishing fleets. Some of these fleets are responsible, others are not.**

The PSMA Agreement will go a long way to ensure that we can properly account for the fish that our taken out of our region.

- **We should also call on all coastal nations to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all sea mounts within the Exclusive Economic Zones, and to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all sea mounts in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.** As some of you know, deep sea bed trawling is a very destructive form of fishing. It drags large nets across the ocean floor taking everything along its way. **Sea mounts are important areas of** biodiversity conservation and sustainable fisheries management. All deep sea bed trawling should be eliminated from these areas both within areas of national jurisdiction and beyond. To ensure that this ban is enforced, assistance will need to be provided to SIDS and LDCs to enforce this ban.

Climate Change is the greatest threat and the challenge to the atoll nations like Tuvalu. At the international level the Government of Tuvalu has launched two key initiatives at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul last year. The first was a call for a Pacific Island Climate Change Insurance Facility. This is urgently needed as the Pacific has been badly hit by cyclones in recent

years. We need a predictable source of funding to help us rebuild after the impacts of climate change. This should help us in the addressing the impacts of climate change on our ocean resources (impacts on fisheries, livelihoods of ocean mammals etc). SPREP and UNDP are working together with Tuvalu in initiating a dialogue with regional countries, partners and private sector on this insurance facility.

The other initiative was a call for a UN General Assembly resolution to commence negotiations of a legal agreement to give protection to people displaced by the impacts of climate change. It is a well known fact that millions of people each year are displaced by the impacts of weather events. Climate change is a key factor in this growing human tragedy.

People displaced by climate change are not defined as refugees under the 1951 Refugee Convention and as a consequence fall through the cracks when it comes to legal protection.

These initiatives will all contribute to our efforts towards addressing the impacts of climate change and the survival of our people including our oceans and its resources, including whales.

### **Conclusion**

Tuvalu looks forward to the deliberations where this conference will consider the whole of Ocean approach into the sustainable development and management of oceanic resources including whales and other marine resources.

### **TUVALU MO TE ATUA**

[End]

### **TOKELAU**

#### **Tokelau Statement from Mr. Mikaele Fatia. Director Fisheries**

Honourable Deputy Prime Ministers  
Honourable Ministers  
Director General of SPREP  
Honourable Chairperson  
Senior Officials  
Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like first of all join the previous speakers in thanking the Government and people of Tonga for the warm hospitality extended to our delegation upon arrival and also for hosting this important meeting on your beautiful islands.

Honourable Chair, in April 2010, the late Faipule Foua Toloa, Ulu o Tokelau at the time announced Tokelau's intention to declare a national whale sanctuary in Tokelau's EEZ of 290,000km<sup>2</sup>. In 2011 Faipule Toloa made the Tokelau Whale Sanctuary a commitment by Tokelau to the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Pacific Oceanscape, an initiative also endorsed by Tokelau.

Tokelau comprises three atolls in the South Pacific Ocean between 171° and 173° W longitude and 8° and 10° S latitude. The islands appear to represent habitat for sperm whales, killer whales and anecdotal sightings data suggest, the area is frequented by many other cetacean species including pilot and minke whales which also indicates the presence of Endangered Oceania humpback whales.

### **SOME OF THE VALUES OF A WHALE/ MARINE SANCTUARY FOR TOKELAU**

#### **Conserve migratory species:**

Some marine animals are migratory in nature and thus spend different stages of their life cycles in EEZs of different countries at different times of the year. Because of this nature, these species require regional and even global cooperation for their management and protection. It is important to consider that Tokelau may be a migration corridor for these migratory species, especially to breeding grounds.

#### **Help threatened species to recover:**

A marine sanctuary will help local species that have become threatened to recover. In addition, certain threatened marine animals migrate long distances, e.g. whales, and a national sanctuary will help in the regional as well as the global effort to manage/protect these resources. Importantly a sanctuary will protect the breeding/nursery ground of an Endangered Oceania humpback whales and others.

#### **Help maintain/improve marine biodiversity:**

A national marine sanctuary will not only help threatened species to recover, but it will also help

in the recruitment process of healthy populations thus keeping them at healthy levels and minimizing the possibility of them becoming threatened. Thus, a sanctuary will help in the conservation of marine biodiversity.

Protect marine ecosystems by identifying and managing threats:

Apart from preserving and recovery of marine species, a marine sanctuary will help in minimizing the degradation of the marine environment from pollution, consistent with Tokelau's Fishing Regulations 1988 (12.1.i) and draw attention to other threats such as fisheries interactions, boat collisions, and climate change on key marine species and their habits.

Support and develop the nature tourism industry:

A national marine sanctuary can lead to development of the tourism industry. For example, whale watching in the Pacific Islands is now a key attraction to international visitors earning the region over \$21 million USD per year. In neighbouring Tonga, tourists go to considerable expense and travel time to get to the northern islands of Vava'u specifically to see whales. There is a potential market for this in Tokelau with good regional models to support the initiative.

Attract support for education and research:

A Marine Sanctuary will help to increase our knowledge and understanding of marine species and ecosystems in Tokelau. At the 2010 meeting of the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium (SPWRC) support was pledged to Tokelau to assist in identifying and managing marine mammals in their waters. SPREP and partnering NGO's are also able to provide support and technical advice to Tokelau in implementing the research and education values of their sanctuary.

Malo Aupito

[End]

## **NEW CALEDONIA**

### **DECLARATION –**

#### **GOVERNMENT OF NEW CALEDONIA**

Speaker : Ms. Soumynie KARTADIWIRJA, Chief of Staff for the Hon. Anthony Lecren

Mr. Chairman, Your Honorable Deputy Prime Minister,

Dear Honourable Ministers and distinguished representatives of the Governments of the Pacific

Director General of SPREP,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Malo e lelei

It is customary in my country to offer a present to convey our message in a traditional way. This present symbolizes the spirit and thoughts of my people.

I do that with you Honorable Deputy Prime minister. Malo.

On behalf of the Minister of Sustainable Development in New Caledonia, the Honorable Anthony Lecren, I would like to thank the Kingdom of Tonga for hosting us and for the organization of this conference.

Malo to the SPREP team!

Since 2014, New Caledonia has created the natural park of the coral sea, covering its entire EEZ, that is to say 1.3 million square kilometers. The park has a managing committee, composed of four balanced pillars (institutional, customary, socio-professional and representatives of civil society), which is currently developing a management plan for the park.

Two particularities can be noted in this committee: the presence of the customary authorities to promote traditional knowledge (as it is the case in the Cook Islands I think), look the logo of the marine park. It's a toutoute to call people with kanak traditional design. Call the kanak people, call people for resilient development.

And the participation, for the first time, of our regional neighbors which contribute to the committee's new and innovative approach to its work. The committee uses also the experience of the scientific community to define management measures.

The committee strengthens privileged partnerships with both the three provinces of New Caledonia, and neighboring countries, such as Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Australia and Papua New Guinea. This should bring together all the

stakeholders and integrate regional networks to manage our ocean in a coherent way. We already have co-operation agreements with the Cook Islands and Australia in which the management of marine mammals occupies a significant place.

Through our participation in regional organizations such as PIF, SPREP, PIDF and Oceania Meetings, we hope that New Caledonia will contribute to finding concrete solutions for a protected ocean and a sustainable development.

All together, small countries we are, we have to find the right balance between economic development and preservation of this gift that Nature gave to us.

Do you know that in the yams calendar, in our Kanak calendar, the arrival of whales in our waters means it is time to plant this sacred tuber? Indeed, the kanak have linked marine biodiversity to traditional knowledge. This notion must be preserved and transmitted to our future generations.

Traditions are important in Oceania. They are part of the solutions to the issues we face. In June, we will organize the green Pacific festival, which will focus on the theme of traditional knowledge and we would like all countries to prepare Oceania's traditional message, of, which will be brought to New York, together.

The message of three brothers: Micronesia, Polynesia and Melanesia.

We support you on all the issues we have discussed, and we encourage the Kingdom of Tonga to convey our voice.

Thank you  
Malo aupito  
Merci beaucoup

Soumynie KARTADIWIRJA

[End]

## **FRENCH POLYNESIA**

### **Statement from French Polynesia Ms. Fanny Marte, Environment**

Thank you to the Government of Tonga for your hospitality and to SPREP for organising this conference. I am going to share with you what we

do in French Polynesia for the conservation and préservation of the marine mammals.

Marine mammals are protected marine species which are a part of the cultural and natural French Polynesian heritage. They have an essential role in the functioning and the preservation of the marine ecosystem. Conscious of the threats which weigh on these giants of the seas, the country set up a marine sanctuary and a regulation interactive with it on all its Exclusive Economic Zone of 5.5 million km<sup>2</sup>, making French Polynesia's territorial waters one of the biggest sanctuaries in the world.

French Polynesia established its own Action plan. The environment direction make some actions every year for the protection of marine mammals.

### **1. Information, raising awareness, education and communication.**

Information media are developed like flyers, posters, kakemono for example. Speeches in schools by the environment direction or professors themselves. The country set up an important communication budget for the protected marine species. So, diverse flyer, posters, press articles, postings on buses, spots into the cinema or on radio and TV are diffused during the season, from July till November. Then, an agreement with an association for the protection of marine mammals is established every year to lead an awareness campaign on the waters during the period of whale watching.

### **2. Capacity building and research**

The implementation of a local area network of beaching, grounding is in progress including training for emergencies with several referrals in many islands of French Polynesia who can cover a big part of the country. Furthermore, several associative or judicial collaborations allow the environment direction to spread the raising awareness and control.

Within the framework of the improvement of knowledge, the country set up a monitoring centre of the marine species protection in the form of mapping and information sheets on these species. Finally, scientific, economical and tourism research are made every year to see the evolution of whale watching.

### 3. Reduction of the threats

Trainings with whale watchers, magistrates are assured by the environment direction. Thanks to the awareness campaign via the radio or TV, all the French Polynesia is informed to ensure a communication for all the population in particular fishermen or transport ships.

### 4. Regulations and tourism

French Polynesia is one of the rare territories where we are allowed to swim with whales. It attracts a lot of tourists.

The presence of boats and swimmers around these animals represent pressures which can change the behaviour of them. The French Polynesia regulated the activities of whale watching, with similar regulations for every user of the sea taking into account the respect of the animals and the safety of the population. Controls during the season are assured by the environment direction with the cooperation of law enforcement.

Every year, an assessment is done and show a clear improvement on the behaviour and the respect for the regulations by the sea users. This improvement is understandable by an awareness of the population for the importance and the necessity of setting up regulations to protect the natural and cultural French Polynesia heritage while considering the safety of the population and the sustainability of the activities of whale and dolphin watching.

Thank you

[End]

**FIJI**

**Fiji Statement delivered by  
Ms. Ms. Eleni Tokaduadua,  
Principal Environment Officer,  
Environment Department**

Mr. Chair, Hon Minister for Environment, Hon. Ministers, distinguished members, ladies and gentlemen. Bula vinaka.

Firstly allow me on behalf of the Fiji Government to express our appreciation and gratitude to the government of the Kingdom of Tonga in hosting this important conference, and for the warm welcome since our arrival to this beautiful country.

The Fijian government is strongly committed to the conservation and management of whales and dolphins (cetaceans) in national waters. This is apparent in the declaration that the Fiji Government made in March, 2003, where it declared its waters as a Whale Sanctuary.

In 2006, Fiji was one of the initial signatories to the UN Convention on Migratory Species Memorandum of Understanding for the Conservation of Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Island Region (CMS Pacific Cetaceans MoU) and we are proud to be co-chairing the Oceans Conference in New York with the Government of Sweden in June to further highlight our commitments at an international arena.

We acknowledge and appreciate the intent of this conference in further contributing to the outcomes of the upcoming UN Oceans conference

Whales are an important indicator species, an ambassador of the oceans health. Whales have also a respected cultural value for the Fijian people. They highly regard the sperm whale tooth or *tabua* as a symbol of genuine commitments or to reciprocate heartfelt gestures that are invaluable to our people. For example, the presentation of a *tabua* can summon a war, an act of reconciliation, strengthening alliances, summon meaningful engagements in marriages or bereavements and negotiations, and in exchange of pledges, to name a few. As such, *tabua* is strictly regulated under our Endangered and Protected Species Act 2002 which implements CITES at national level.

Past historical data shows that whales were in abundance in Fiji waters, which is in contrast to present day numbers after massive whaling took place in the 1900's. In the 1950s, Fiji has been identified as a critical breeding and calving ground for the endangered Oceania humpback population. Fiji waters have also documented 18 confirmed species of cetaceans inclusive of Threatened species identified under IUCN.

Fiji participated in a meeting of experts in Samoa over the past week to identify important Marine Mammal areas in the region. The meeting provided an opportunity for Fiji to propose a significantly important area as a marine mammal area, namely the Vatu-i-ra Seascape, and listing another 4 key areas of interest within Fijian waters.

Fiji's whale watching industry is at budding stages. We have one dolphin watch operator who practices responsible tourism following the regional whale and dolphin watching guideline. Opportunistic humpback whale watching is also being carried out by dive boats.

In all these commitments, Fiji recognizes the important roles our people and communities play, and the technical contributions of NGOs in supporting national development in the areas of oceans and cetacean management in our waters. Fiji urges member countries to continue to recognize their efforts for the future development of our region.

Along with our national commitments, our expectation from this meeting is to increase collaboration within the Pacific region in its continued efforts to strengthen and generate more awareness and interest, build stronger networks with expert groups, and sharing lessons from budding whale watching industries on the importance and significance of cetaceans within our Pacific.

Thank you Chair.

[End]

#### **SOUTH PACIFIC TOURISM ORGANISATION (SPTO)**

**Statement delivered by SPTO,  
Ms. Christina Gale,  
Sustainable Tourism Development Manager**

Hon. Acting Prime Minister of Tonga, Hon. Deputy Prime of Samoa, Honourable Ministers from Cook Islands and Tonga, Your Excellencies, Government Representatives, Ladies and Gentlemen. We thank the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga and its people for the excellent hosting of this important event. Thank you Leota Kosi Latu and the SPREP

team for the vision and the professional coordination of the conference.

The South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) is an intergovernmental organisation mandated for marketing and the development of tourism in the Pacific. We are happy to be part of this important initiative and certainly honoured to have hosted you for Morning Tea today.

The Pacific Tourism Council of Ministers and the Board of Directors of SPTO endorsed the establishment of its Sustainable Tourism Development Division in 2015, which was finally operational at the beginning of this year. This shows strong commitment to and recognition of Sustainable Tourism as the Way Forward for Pacific Tourism.

Whale Watching in the Pacific is one of the main marine tourism activities for our Pacific destinations like Tonga and there is potential for ensuring a stronger commitment to sustainable practices, through Responsible Whale Watching that supports local economies and promotes whale education and conservation.

2017 is the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development and it will not end here. We look forward to learning from our Pacific an international experts about the issues affecting our Pacific Whales and how our tourism stakeholders (through Governments via the National Tourism Offices, communities, private sector, NGOs and partners) can better contribute to addressing the challenges and threats that lie ahead in order to harness the opportunities for our people.

SPTO is committed to the development of a Pacific Regional Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework to support its member countries and private sector in the development of sustainable tourism in the Pacific region.

Malo Aupito.

[End]



## Presentations

*Presentations appear in order of the programme and where they have been made available to the Secretariat.*

### Day 1: Tuesday April 4, 2017

#### **Keynote Address from Dr. Nick Gales Australian Commissioner, International Whaling Commission**

##### **Introduction**

- Ministers, Director General, and distinguished delegates: **Mālō e lelei**, and good afternoon.
- It is a great privilege to be back in Tonga and to be invited to speak today. I had the pleasure of sailing her with my young family many years ago. My long Pacific voyage gave me a brief personal glimpse of this extraordinary ocean.
- I speak on behalf of the Hon. Josh Frydenberg, Australian Minister for the Environment and Energy.
- I know he joins me in thanking the Government of Tonga and acting Prime Minister Sovaleni for hosting this important conference and for the opportunity to deepen regional collaboration on whale and dolphin conservation.
- Australia is a proud member and supporter of SPREP, an organisation whose work plays an incredibly important role in bringing together the countries of the Pacific to collaborate on regional and global environmental issues, including whale and dolphin conservation.
- We thank SPREP for their initiative in holding this conference as the flagship event of the Pacific Year of the Whale, and for their ongoing support of whale watching and ecotourism.
- The strong participation of governments across the Pacific at this meeting demonstrates the importance of whale and dolphin conservation to our region, and that collaboration is required to address the threats they face.

##### **Broad context**

- Last week I was sitting on the Australian Antarctic Icebreaker, *Aurora Australis*, deep in the southern parts of the Pacific Ocean at Macquarie Island, and was contemplating what

I should say at this celebration of Pacific whales –

- And particularly what is it we should all be contemplating this week about why – or even if – whales are important to us and what, collectively, we should be doing to secure their and indeed our futures.
- We all know the story of whales and whaling – a story – put simply - of great abundance reduced to almost nothing through commercial greed, lack of regulation and – at its core – a lack of understanding of what such massive industrial extraction would do to whales, the oceans and to the people whose wellbeing and livelihoods relies upon healthy and productive oceans.
- We meet here in Tonga at an important point in that story. Some whales – such as the humpback whales of Tonga – are recovering, and the International Whaling Commission maintains the global moratorium on commercial whaling.
- But there is now much more to this story and I want to use the next ten minutes or so to reflect on what I think are some of the most relevant elements to our discussions this week.
- I want to start by reflecting on what was once here – before European whaling in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries.
- I will then take a quick step sideways out of the timeline story to consider why it is that whales and dolphins play such an iconic and influential role in marine conservation and management and why we might wish to give them special consideration in our global endeavour towards a future that includes healthy oceans.
- I will then spend a few minutes considering the here and now – what are the important threats to whales – why are they important, and how, and by what global, regional or local processes those threats are being managed.
- Finally, having looked back, I want to look forward and consider what opportunities there are in the Pacific, through SPREP, the IWC and other arrangements for whale and ocean conservation.

##### **Historic benchmarks**

- So – what was it like in the Pacific, and to our south, before the era of European whaling?
- Most of us in this room have grown up largely through a period when the scarce whales of our childhood have become an increasingly common seasonal visitor to our coasts. Indeed, nowadays, on a trip up the east coast of Australia during winter it's a serious challenge NOT to see humpback whales.
- To us the current status of whales and dolphins is our 'normal' from which we might measure change.
- But when you look at historic records you get some appreciation of just how many whales there must have once been.
- Southern Right Whales in the Derwent River of my home city of Hobart kept residents awake at night – and yet today a Right Whale sighting in the Derwent will be reported in the local newspaper.
- The early European whalers who arrived in the Ross Sea, way to our south in Antarctica, found so many blue whales inside the Ross Sea ice barrier that they simply could not, for many years, take all the whales they saw. Today we need the latest in acoustic tracking technology to find these enormous, still rarely sighted whales, and only then well outside the Ross Sea.
- The European sailing ships that hunted Sperm Whales in the Pacific during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century would drop by Tonga to top up whale oil supplies with the many easily hunted humpback whales they found scattered through these beautiful islands – numbers that would dwarf the current recovering population that is so important to Tonga's growing whale watching industry today.
- My point is; whales were once massively more abundant than today in numbers that are simply hard for us – or indeed our parents and their parents before them - to imagine.
- These were also times before industrial fishing - when fisheries were artisanal and primarily restricted to near shore regions.
- The big lesson to us all in this is that those historically abundant and healthy oceans supported fish stocks AND whale populations at a scale no living human has seen.

- Today we hear an argument that many whales means fewer fish for humans to catch. The fact of such great historic abundance – across the whole of the marine ecosystem – proves this argument has no basis.
- A healthy ocean not only **can** support large whale populations, but actually **needs** viable populations of predators and prey to be sufficiently productive to support sustainable fisheries, and the wellbeing of the many people who rely on the oceans for their livelihood.
- I will return briefly to this point in a few minutes.

### Iconic whales

- I want now to dwell very briefly on why it is that whales are such an iconic element of our marine ecosystems.
- Many say that the reason is that whales were at the vanguard of the modern conservation movement – they are iconic because the 'save the whales' campaign of 1960s led to the globally important and influential conservation movement of today.
- But I believe the reason is more deep seated than this. I believe it sits with our limited ability to visualise, understand and perceive the massive oceans on which we all rely.
- We are terrestrial beings. We understand our terrestrial world reasonably well. Everyone in this room can recognise, at a glance, a healthy viable landscape from one that is degraded and unproductive.
- We see it in the diversity of the landscape, and now in the era of the Anthropocene, when humans have such an impact on our environment, we see it in how well managed and conserved a forest, an urban park, an agricultural plot or a coastal strip is.
- An industrialised landscape is immediately apparent and we strive to balance our impacts on land with the essential uses we must make of it to survive.
- But for most people the impacts of our relationship with the 2/3 of the globe that is our oceans is all but invisible.
- A healthy, productive oceanscape looks, at the surface, largely indistinguishable from a degraded and unproductive ocean.

- The Mediterranean of today still looks beautiful and inviting – and yet its sea life is a minute fraction of the once abundant and productive ocean that fed all its coastal communities and supported a massive diversity of life.
- We cannot see the consequences of poorly regulated, industrialised benthic trawling that destroys habitat and diversity at the same scale as the immediately obvious wholesale clear felling of our forests.
- We see no external signs when we have caught too much fish and there are now not sufficient for our children and grandchildren to catch.
- Indeed, we mask these few measurable impacts by constantly getting smarter and more efficient at the way we catch our fish, so our annual catches remain high, but we continue to risk over-exploitation of the remnant wild stock.
- But as we look out over the oceans – we **can** see the animals that rise to the surface to breath or feed. Among these animals the whales and dolphins are perhaps the most spectacularly visible – the great whales challenging our sense of scale and wonder; they enter our mythology, our art and our imaginations.
- It is the very presence of these animals – as a normal part of our ocean experience – that we can interpret – at least in part - as a signal of healthy oceans.
- They are the maritime versions of our canaries in the cave.
- But they do more than act as sentinels of health - they not only depend on healthy ecosystems to thrive, they play key roles within those systems in maintaining that health as consumers **and** as part of the process that drives productivity.
- I return again to the key message I raised earlier; the simple argument that the food whales consume limits our own fisheries yields is not valid. Rather – the counter is true.
- Abundant and diverse populations of whales and dolphins are a highly visible, functionally important and meaningful icon of ocean health.

- So, it is entirely appropriate, timely and greatly encouraging that the focus of this meeting is the conservation of whales and dolphins – and their link to healthy oceans.

#### Current and new threats

- Last year at the biennial IWC meeting we celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the moratorium on commercial whaling. It also marked almost 40 years since the last whales were commercially hunted in the Pacific and in Australia.
- At that time a ban on whaling removed the most significant global threat to the survival of whales – and that single action has been dramatically successful in driving the recovery process for many of the globes whale populations.
- However some populations – such as Antarctic blue whales and Southern Right whales remain at a small percentage of their pre-whaling abundance – so major challenges remain.
- That challenge however is vastly more complex than at the time the moratorium came into force. We now know the globes' whales and dolphins face a much wider array of threats than the whaler's gun.
- Bycatch and entanglement account for the deaths of over 300,000 small cetaceans each year, along with many large whales. The individual and cumulative effects of habitat degradation, pollution, plastic ingestion, over-fishing, noise and ship strike currently defy measurement, but we know that at regional and local scales these are very serious threats.
- Sitting over the top of all of these of course is Climate Change. Our Oceans absorb >90% of the heat in our atmosphere, and 1/3 of the carbon dioxide.
- This means our oceans are warming, freshening, carrying less oxygen and becoming more acidic. These changes are at a pace and scale unprecedented in the period of the evolution of modern humans – and indeed many eons before that.
- They are at a pace that defies evolutionary response.
- The Atmosphere, which is largely mediated by the temperature and circulation of our oceans

is responding with changing weather and rainfall patterns, and increasingly frequent extreme events.

- For low lying Pacific nations these extreme events are particularly catastrophic.
- Climate change, and the myriad of other marine threats to whales and dolphins require solutions and actions from the local, through national, regional and global scale.
- It's a challenge of the grandest of proportions and urgency.
- For whales, a cornerstone of this suite of priority actions is the maintenance of the global moratorium on commercial whaling.
- While the debate in the IWC is characterised by some as a stalemate between those who wish to protect whales and those who wish to resume hunting them – this view is a narrow one and lacks an appropriate historic or contemporary context.
- If fails to reflect the reality the IWC – as the globally recognised leading organisation for the conservation and management of whales – faces.
- The reality is that the depletion of the great whales was brutally efficient and their recovery sits at a modest, but encouraging trajectory.
- As I mentioned earlier, we now know that healthy whale and dolphin populations are critically important functional parts of our marine ecosystems, and that the continued recovery of these whales requires more than maintaining the moratorium.
- The range and scale of threats means the IWC must - as a matter of priority - focus more broadly on its core conservation mandate.
- Its truly exciting to see the IWC embrace this challenge and lead global attention and efforts to address these important issues, particularly bycatch and entanglement.
- It is equally important and exciting to see the IWC represented at this meeting where regional planning and actions through SPREP and other national and bilateral arrangements can be forged towards our shared goal of the conservation of whales and dolphins.
- The Pacific Ocean is a critical site for whale and dolphin conservation.
- It is home to more than half of the world's whale and dolphin species – at least 30 species are known to either migrate or reside within the waters of 22 Pacific island countries and territories
- Pacific cultures – with their deep relationship with the ocean – have understood – perhaps more than any other region – the fundamental relationships between whales and dolphins and the oceans on which we all rely for our ultimate wellbeing.
- I look forward to learning more about these relationships in the next few days – and particularly how the harmony of Pacific cultures with whales and dolphins might inform our future challenges.
- Over the next few days we will also hear of the extraordinary science – delivered through Pacific wide partnerships and collaborations - that has and continues to be undertaken.
- Science which informs policy and management in a very direct way and which links to our broader considerations of ocean governance and management.
- In addition we will hear of the growth in the booming whale and dolphin watching industry. In 2008, the whale watching industry was worth \$2.1 billion globally and employed over 13,000 people.
- In the same year, whale and dolphin watching in the Pacific was worth US\$21 million, supported almost 2000 jobs, and was growing at a staggering 45% per year.
- We don't have more updated data, but its clear that whale and dolphin watching has continued its rapid growth in the region and that this industry brings social, economic and environmental benefits to our region.

#### Conclusion

- And so to conclude with the most important challenge – the reason we are here.
- We need to answer how this meeting will make a difference – What is it we might achieve over the next 3 days.
- We have the right people assembled; an impressive gathering of ministers, officials,

#### Pacific context

scientists, representatives of civil society (IGOs, NGOs) and others.

- It is up to our collective vision to shape the future of whale and dolphin conservation in the Pacific – and how this might leverage a broader suite of actions towards sustainable and healthy oceans.
- For my small part I offer some suggestions, along with strong encouragement to be bold in our collective ambition to make a difference at the regional scale that is within our sphere of influence – The mighty Pacific Ocean.
- **Firstly** we should take advantage of existing knowledge and structures.
- The IWC represents the global lead in whale and dolphin conservation and management. It is the repository of great knowledge and unmatched scientific expertise.
- I urge you to make use of everything it has to offer: from access to expertise on ship strikes, entanglement and whale conservation management tools, to funding for undertaking small cetacean research and developing – where appropriate – conservation management plans.
- The IWC is also working on an online whale watching handbook to be released next year which will support whale watching operators, regulators and managers, and those planning a whale watching trip, to educate and help ensure whale watching is sustainable now, and as it develops into the future. The chair of that group – Ryan Wulff – is here. Go and speak to him about how you can get involved.
- My **second** key suggestion is to link to the IWC at all levels – but particularly through your existing national environmental and fisheries organisations. SPREP of course sits at the core of this, but the Pacific RFMOs also offer an enormous opportunity to learn from each other – share data – and align conservation and management efforts across the broad range of marine conservation and use.
- A simple, practical example is to share existing data, such as that collected through the Regional Observer Program held within SPC, to assist in analysing distribution and trends of bycatch species including whales.
- Perhaps my most ambitious challenge is to consider our important, targeted conservation efforts for whales and dolphins as a model for the broader issues of ocean governance, and as key and absolutely necessary steps towards the important ambition of ensuring our futures are mediated through healthy oceans.
- If we can focus collective actions on a tractable and achievable conservation goal of maximising the conservation status of pacific whales and dolphins – and achieve successes - then broader and more complex challenges in marine conservation and management can come into scope.
- By addressing what we need to do for whales and dolphins, we take ourselves a long way down paths of marine conservation that might now seem intractable and fraught.
- Such an approach could signal global leadership from the Pacific on an issue for which it is eminently qualified to lead.
- Pacific cultures, their links to the oceans, the diversity and significance of its marine fauna, and the quality of the existing scale of collaboration in science and policy – all provide an ambitious but achievable focus for this week's meeting.
- I am truly honoured to be here as Australia's Whales Commissioner, and look forward to listening to the ideas that emerge over the next few days.
- The Pacific Islands have a powerful story to tell the rest of the world. In two months' time, the United Nations will hold a major conference on oceans to support the implementation of sustainable development goal 14.
- Although being held at UN headquarters in New York, the Ocean Conference has its genesis in the Pacific. The Government of Fiji co-sponsored the summit, and hosted the regional preparatory meeting last month. This has helped to reinforce the Pacific's reputation as a global champion for oceans and marine conservation.
- Pacific Island nations made a powerful and eloquent message to the world at the UNFCCC meeting in Paris in 2015. You will soon also have the same opportunity to speak with one

voice and reaffirm the importance of whales and dolphins to marine conservation, and to healthy oceans, in New York.

- Thank you.

[End]

### **What whales mean to the people and economies of Niue**

**Fiafia Rex**

Monu monu Tagaloa!

Fakalofa lahi atu and Malo e lelei to Honourable ministers, dignitaries and to friends and colleagues from around the globe but especially Fakalofa atu to our Pacific Island brothers and sisters.

What a great honour and privilege to not only be invited to this prestigious event, but to share with you the work and commitment by the only Pacific Island led and run non government organisation in the region – Oma Tafua – dedicated to the protection and conservation of marine mammals as well as educating the Niuean community of marine mammals.

My name is Fiafia Rex and I founded the NGO Oma Tafua in 2006 which when translated means “To treasure whales” in Niuean.

I’m not too sure if you’re familiar with the legend of Mataginifale but it goes: Mataginifale from the village of Oneonepata, Avatele. She used to tease this humpback whale “ulu ulu ta pekelei” whale with a big ugly head. So one day when she was beating her hiapo (tapa) near the coast she was swallowed up the whale. She used her turtle shell to scrape the belly of the whale which irritated it so much that she managed to escape and land in the Kingdom of Tonga where here she was said to have taught the art of childbirth. To this day the legend of Mataginifale still resonates in Niuean culture.

These are only some of the myths, stories and legends passed down from generation to generation we learn through song, dance, oral traditions.

The legend is incorporated in our logo. You have the figure of Mataginifale lying down, you have the ominous shark that visited her frequently along the coastline in grey, the heavens above, the oceans

below and the red marking Mataginifale’s fabled heart rested on the shores of her homeland Niue.

It goes without saying and something Rawiri Paratene from the Whale Rider said so eloquently that our Pacific people have had the longest standing relationship with our whales.

**There is a famous saying by one our Pacific Island colleague that “whales are more Pacific Islander than the Pacific Islanders overseas”. Not only are they born in the Pacific – but they always come back! There’s no place like home even you and I know. And this Pacific Ocean is their home first and foremost.**

Oma Tafua is the one agency in Niue that not only commits to meeting the management objectives and research mandate under Niue’s Plan of Management for our Whale Sanctuary and the SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan, and in turn CMS obligations, but single handedly conducts the boat operator training - and for the first time last year – to time Niue’s legislation of our Whale Watching Regulations that we worked so hard to get - literally it’s taken us almost 10 years to legislate - we initiated and conducted Niue and the Region’s first enforcement training workshop bringing all relevant stakeholders such as the Niue Customs, Crown Law, Immigration, Maritime Transport, Police and Fisheries and Environment so that they are familiar on the Regulations such as distances and what to do for monitoring and compliance purposes.

Under national, regional and international obligations – Oma Tafua, under a most tight budget of less than \$6k on average yearly since 2008 does all this. What makes all this achievable are all the volunteers and the Niuean community and Niue artists and musicians that fundraise and engage in supporting the cause. But it also raises awareness for us and for the status of marine mammals too in our Region.

While we’re always needing financial assistance in Niue for research, please prioritise those Pacific Islands to meet their country obligations under the SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan - in the way of research for lack of human resources and finance.

This contributes to the IUCN Taskforce on identifying important marine mammal areas.

But helping identify also critical habitats for all marine mammals and filling gaps of the unknown.

It is so fitting that we are here in Tonga to celebrate a most precious and special resource in the Region – our Endangered humpback whales. The humpback highway of the Pacific. A resource that is so fragile and close especially to my heart. As a Pacific Island woman you may wonder why I have short hair which you might think is changing the subject. One year my friend asked me if I could join them in shaving all their hair off for a cancer charity. I thought great idea, but, instead of donating to that charity and I had to say sorry to my friend – I ended up donating the funds raised which was over \$2,000k to our NGO and the work that we do. Being on a tight working budget we are so familiar with “struggle”. Personal sacrifice is not unfamiliar territory to us. I broke tradition in actually doing this. Culturally in our country there’s a haircutting ceremony only for the boys and it’s to celebrate their coming of age. At a boy’s coming of age ceremony those invited would cut a strand of their hair and take it as a keepsake and in return they give sums of money. The same happened here but at my village showday and the amount of support by the Niueans was amazing. For my brother for him it was embarrassing and shameful as he’s very traditional, but to have the Niuean’s embrace this knowing that Oma Tafua is theirs – it was heartwarming that they donated towards this cause. So they donated money for a strand of my hair and made a wish for Oma. As a gift to them we presented them with whale necklaces.

Because we are in Tonga, I want to leave you with one of our most special whales seen in 2015. I absolutely love this whale because of its stunning tail – distinctively black and white. I had been stuck for a name as we wish to name the whales after people that have been instrumental/influential in the work that we do. But that year was a sad year for rugby union if you remember in 2015. Now in the Pacific I know we’re all big fans of rugby. We share the love of rugby. What we also share are our migratory humpback whales. We must be reminded of this. Whales migrate through several jurisdictions and not only do they migrate, but they bring and leave joy wherever they go. Economically whales are worth more alive to us than dead. Through whale watching, in one humpback whale’s lifetime it would have generated \$1m to the whale

watching industry. Whales much like rugby brings people together. People flock to see whales.

So in 2015, having received the sad news of the passing of the legendary Jonah Lomu, we decided to name this gentle giant of the sea – Jonah – for he was the gentle giant on the field. And because even our whale research team love rugby. So keep an eye out for Jonah.

To return to Oma Tafua I want to tell you how the NGO came to be established. In short, it was built and driven on the sheer fact of IGNORANCE. When I founded Oma Tafua I was very uneducated with anything on marine mammals except for our protective laws which was very familiar to me.

I was qualified but still I was very raw and ignorant. I saw that Niue was stringent with our laws way before Oma Tafua was established and I wondered why did we need to do more work – isn’t it enough that we have the whale sanctuaries and domestic legislation in place. This is the mentality of myself as a graduate and a Fisheries Officer.

**SO, I learnt a very long time ago that qualifications won’t get you far if you are without passion and dedication in the work that you do. You might be more broke than you started, but the reward is bigger!**

So I have a very special person to thank for that – my mentor Olive Andrews who has been tremendous in instilling education and capacity building on the island in planting just the one seed – in myself – and now the fruits that we bear are in the form of our NGO outputs and products, and what has grown from small beginnings. It doesn’t take much to grow – you just need time and passion. If it’s one thing I’ve learnt at the very start it’s knowledge and education – in everything we try and do anywhere in the Pacific – start first with education and plant your seeds.

Knowledge is indeed power and Oma has only become empowered through our knowledge of marine mammals – the lessons learned in the management of our sanctuary, the importance of building and synergizing our cultural values into our whale watching industry to benefit the Niuean people, our economy and protecting our resource, the science and traditional knowledge incorporated in our dissemination of our education programs not

only to schools at all levels but to the tourism industry, government sector and the wider Niuean community.

Because of our work, we not only represent Niue but the Pacific as a whole. For our Oceania Humpback whales, being Endangered still and having learnt more perhaps about their slow recovery of their particular population – and we are still learning. We must engage in work in learning more about what impacts their recovery. Our job is never over and we thank the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium and SPREP for always informing us.

Our theme is whales in a changing ocean – BUT WE are forever changing their way of life. Whales during their migration are prone to anthropogenic threats. Not only do we have so much to gain from their existence but they're susceptible to our very own existence. We've introduced microplastics into their world the size of islands and exacerbated the rate of climate change – earth's natural order. Bycatch, pollution, entanglements, shipping causing havoc to their navigations and communications, ship strike. Oma Tafua urges all of us to look closely at their habitats too for their protection. Oma Tafua has branched out and engaged in community coastal clean ups and dive clean ups around Niue as part of our paradigm shift to looking after ocean habitats. We must collectively own and share responsibility in the protection of these precious animals and their habitats. I thank you once again for allowing me this opportunity and allowing this forum to be a part of the Oma Tafua journey. Oue tulu tulou, Malo Apito & Kia Monuina.

[End]

**Tiare T. Holm, Sustainable Decisions**

**Keynote #4: What whales mean to the people and economies of Palau**

1. Good afternoon, Honorable Deputy Prime Minister Sovaleni, Honorable Ministers, Director General Latu, Dr. Hoyt, Dr. Notarbartolo di Sciara, Colleagues and friends, Malo e lelei and Alii from Belau.

2. I'd like to thank our friends at SPREP, in particular, Mike Donahue and the beautiful SPREP team, as well as our gracious hosts here in Tonga for inviting me to this meeting and for their warm

hospitality. While it is a LONG WAY from Palau, Tonga, its beauty and its inspirational efforts in whale conservation and management, is well worth the trip.

3. As is the case throughout the Pacific Islands region, marine mammals play an important role in Palau's culture and marine ecosystems. Dugong are highly valued in Palauan culture, reserved only for consumption by the most senior chiefs and matriarchs and only during highly specialized events such as the death or appointment of high chiefs. In fact, we have a traditional legend about Dugong – a tragic love story about a mother and her daughter, whom upon disrespecting her mother and causing her death, dives into the ocean and becomes a dugong.

4. Whales and dolphins, while not present in Palau's legends, are considered friends in the ocean who are occasionally encountered by local fishermen. Palau is blessed with a lagoon abundant with a diverse array of marine resources, therefore Palauan fishermen traditionally stay in the lagoon and do not travel too far beyond the edge of our barrier reefs. Interaction between Palauan community members and whales has therefore never been frequent and Palau does not have a history of whaling for traditional or subsistence purposes. We also have no history of formally permitting whaling in our waters, although whaling was conducted by other nations in Palau's waters historically.

5. Because of the abundance of our lagoon, whales and dolphins have never been considered a preferred or traditional food source.

6. Our dolphins, mostly spinner dolphins, are generally considered friends and guides to our fishermen and local communities. They are guides to productive fishing areas. And they are friends as Palauans know that when dolphins are nearby, we need not worry about the presence of sharks.

7. The playful and curious nature of our spinner dolphins make them special members of our marine family and Palauan children are always excited to see them from their uncles' and fathers' boats, fishing or traveling to and from neighboring villages or to and from our famous rock islands.

8. It is interesting though, because although Palau, along with our Micronesian neighbors, is implementing a variety of inspiring conservation



initiatives, including a national Protected Areas Network, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Micronesia Challenge (a regional commitment to effectively conserve at least 20% of our terrestrial resources and 30% of our near-shore marine resources), the Palau Shark Sanctuary (now becoming a Micronesia-wide sub-regional initiative), and now the Palau National Marine Sanctuary, which eliminates foreign commercial fishing in Palau's EEZ, somewhere along the way we stopped talking about whales and dolphins in our conservation community. We in Palau and Micronesia therefore have precious little factual information about our cetacean community. During the 25 years that I have personally worked in conservation in Palau and in the Pacific, it is only in the last 7-8 years that we have begun to bring cetaceans back into the light of our conservation conversations, where before it was admittedly somewhat taboo.... Mostly, and sadly, for political reasons.

9. My personal cetacean journey began when I was a student at the University of Hawaii and trained dolphins for research into their intelligence and cognitive ability. This is when and where I fell in love with this species. I have always been struck by the fact that a dolphin's intelligence is comparable to that of a two-three year old human child. As a mother of a two year old now, that knowledge hits me especially in the heart when I think of the challenges they face in an increasingly dangerous marine environment with new and emerging threats. However, as I mentioned, until recently these amazing animals, cetaceans, whales and dolphins have been largely ignored in our corner of the ocean.

10. In 2009, after many years of gentle debate over the concept of sustainable use and whales, my sister Sue Miller Tai invited me to my first marine mammal meeting (the ICMMPA1), where I realized that while there was a solid amount of data and information about whales and dolphins in the south pacific, the north pacific, Micronesia including Palau, was a big black hole in terms of data. Yet, at that time, I knew that whaling is a significant part of Micronesia history with whaling ports in Majuro, Kosrae, and Yap. And our fishermen, our dive community and our surf community often see whales and dolphins. We knew they were there but even with all the inspiring marine conservation initiatives, it was as if we were in denial about the

issue of whales and dolphins. We just simply never discussed it. And when it was brought up, occasionally, we avoided the topic. At that first ICMMPA, where I met Mike Donahue, Olive Andrews, Dave Matilla, and others here in this room, my eyes opened. While defending the precious concept of sustainable use, the bedrock of conservation ethic in the Pacific, which has allowed our Pacific island communities to survive over many centuries, my eyes opened as to how other political entities were distorting this concept within international fora and discussions about marine mammals. After this meeting, the cetacean discussion in Palau, then gently and RESPECTFULLY began ....

11. In 2010 the Palau Marine Mammal Sanctuary was established, which protects marine mammals throughout Palau's waters. Bilung Gloria Salii, one of our most senior matriarchs and queen of Koror, Palau's commercial capitol, spoke to the international community at during COP 10 CBD in Nagoya during which she emphasized how important marine mammals are to Pacific Island communities. Our senior matriarch's in 2011 adopted a resolution calling on our traditional and constitutional leaders to support the goals, objectives, and implementation of the Palau Marine Mammal Sanctuary.

12. That same year, our sister Olive Andrews/Whaleology came to Palau to help us gain more insight to the economic potential of cetaceans in Palau by conducting a whale watching feasibility study. You see, the economics are the "carrot" that help us open the conversation about whales and dolphins again with our conservation community and decision-makers. With Guam earning \$13 million in annual direct revenues from two small groups of dolphins, and Palau dolphins often seen incidentally as part of tour and dive activities, this economic "carrot" was instrumental in gaining local and national interest in the issue of cetaceans.

13. THEN, the Palau cetacean research project began with our sister Olive Andrews/Whaleology in partnership with Sustainable Decisions, our Bureau of Marine Resources and volunteers from the SPWRC and a small grant from the Australian Marine Mammal Centre, in 2012 and 2013. This project confirmed the presence of at least 12 species of whales and dolphins in Palau's waters, with the possibility that there could be as many as

30 species because of Palau's location (its proximity to Asia) and the diverse bathymetry of the Palau archipelago, including the Palau trench. To date, this project is the **ONLY TARGETED CETACEAN RESEARCH** ever conducted in Palau's waters. Hard to believe, given the many layers of research, conservation initiatives and opportunities to mobilize resources for conservation in Palau. We **VERY** much need to continue, we **VERY** much need to do more!!! To inform local community members and decision-makers so that we do not continue to, essentially lose out, on this amazing economic and education opportunity!

14. Our next steps are:

a) to continue research;

b) develop the appropriate regulatory framework for whale and dolphin watching; and, c) to build capacity in our local communities and local entrepreneurs in the tourism industry so that our local communities may enjoy the sustainable economic benefits and the inspiration and enjoyment of our whale and dolphin friends and relatives that are part of our Palau and Pacific Island community.

15. As Pacific islanders, we know what it is like to have relatives that live abroad or on other islands or in distant villages, whom we have never met before. Often we meet them for the first time during our traditional customs such as marriages, funerals, and in Palau – first birth ceremonies. This experience of meeting our relatives for the first time is always happy, comforting, and reassuring. When I saw and heard our Palau Whales (Sperm whales, melon-headed whales, pygmy killer whales and more) for the first time during research project surveys, it was almost as if I were meeting some of my relatives whom I had never met. It was an emotion, pride and joy that I really can't describe adequately with words. My dream, our dream is that all Palauans and Pacific islanders, especially our children, will be able to have that same joy and pride of meeting their marine mammal neighbors, friends and relatives and getting to know them a little bit better.

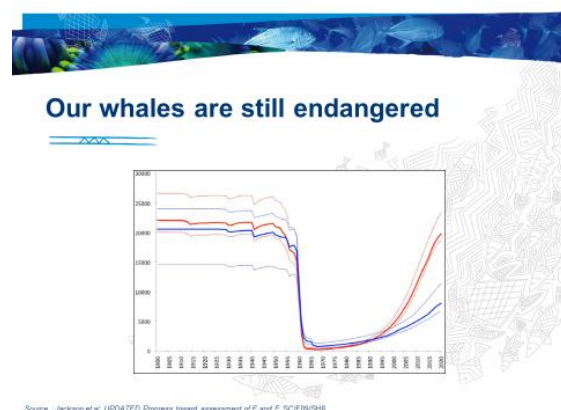
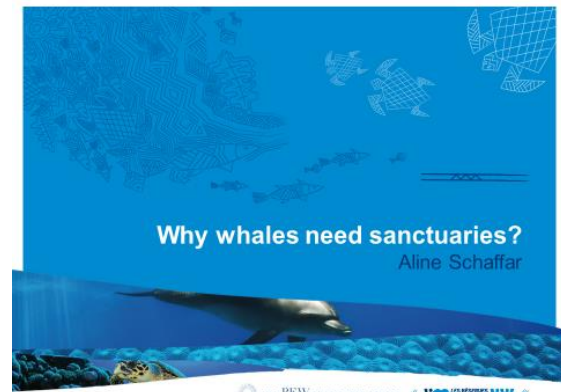
Mesulang and Malo 'au pito!

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## Why Whales Need Whale Sanctuaries

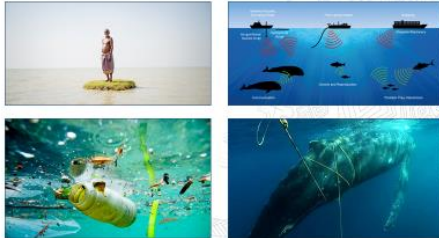
Aline Schaffer,

Pew Charitable Trust, New Caledonia

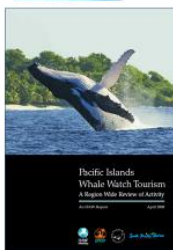


Source : Jackson et al. UPDATED Progress toward assessment of E and F. SCF/9/SH8

## New emerging threats

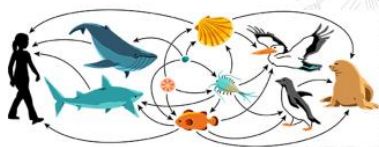


## They are worth more alive

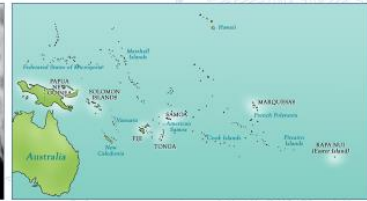


► 21 million US\$ in 2005

## Sentinels of our ocean



## Link between Pacific people

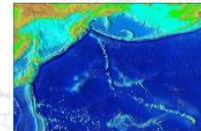


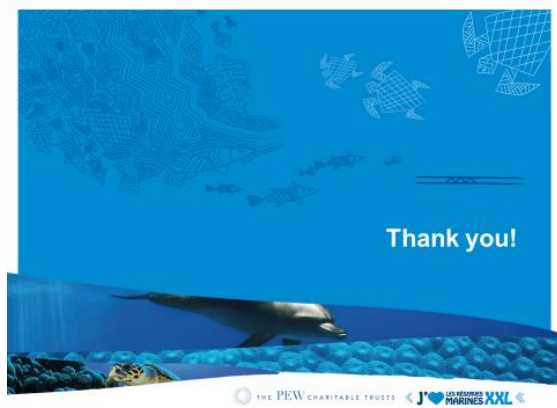
« We are small by our islands but big by our ocean » - Ito Waia

## Cultural significance



## Depend on key habitats







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