

A monthly e-bulletin from the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme

## MESSAGE FROM MR. KOSI LATU, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SPREP

Welcome to the special United Nations Ocean Conference issue of the SPREP-Tok.

This issue includes the wide range of news which came from the first ever United Nations conference on the ocean, which was held in New York from the 5–9 June 2017. The special event was co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden and resulted in the Call For Action document as well as over 1,300 registered voluntary commitments for our ocean.

SPREP's preparations for the UN Ocean Conference started late last year and picked up the pace in January this year as preparations for the regional preparatory meeting in Fiji in March went into full swing mode.

The SPREP delegation provided support to our member countries and territories who attended the conference, and our Pacific profile was very much enhanced as our team worked closely with leaders, members and partners in various events and meetings to raise the level of consciousness of the global community on issues concerning Oceans. We partnered with the Government of Fiji to host a Pacific photo exhibition in the UN, we had a Pacific booth next to that of FFA, a side event led by SPREP and we supported Pacific media attendance resulting in great coverage for our region.



Mr. Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP.

The Pacific presence was strong at the UNOC.

We'd also like to extend our gratitude to the Governments of Fiji and Sweden for their work as co-hosts of the UNOC.

I hope you enjoy reading this special issue of the SPREP-Tok, dedicated to our Ocean.

Soifua,

## SPREP-Tok UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE SPECIAL EDITION



L-R: Prime Minister of Fiji, Voreqe Bainimarama, Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres, Sai Navoti

### PLANET EARTH TO PLANET WATER – UN SECRETARY GENERAL GUTERRES

The world's oceans will continue to deteriorate if members of the United Nations continue to let territorial and resource interests to block conservation measures. Secretary General of the United Nations, António Guterres also urged delegates to put aside short-term national gains to prevent long-term global catastrophe.

SG Guterres said Planet Earth could have been renamed Planet Water since the oceans and seas cover two-thirds of our home.

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Our vision: A resilient Pacific environment sustaining our livelihoods and natural heritage in harmony with our cultures.

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**BAINIMARAMA CALLS FOR GLOBAL CRUSADE TO SAVE THE OCEANS**



Prime Minister of Fiji, Voreqe Bainimarama, (middle) co-host of the UN Ocean Conference. Photo: SPREP

The first global oceans conference in New York opened with messages of optimism and hope that all countries will mobilise its 7.5 billion citizens to take up the global fight to improve the quality of the world's oceans. He urged world leaders and delegates and other stakeholders present in New York last month to stop the degradation of the world's oceans and roll back the tide of neglect and preserve marine resources for the future generations to come.

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**FSM AND MARSHALL ISLANDS PUSH FOR RESOLUTION ON NUCLEAR CONTAMINATION AND WORLD WAR 2 WRECKS**



H.E. President Peter Christian of the Federated States of Micronesia.

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Marshall Islands have used the UN Ocean Conference held in New York to amplify their long-standing concerns about nuclear contamination and pollution from World War 2 wrecks. President Peter Christian of FSM said nuclear contamination is a serious threat for small island countries in the north Pacific because of claims that the fall-out from the nuclear tests conducted in the Marshall islands may have reached as far as Palau.

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**'TRUCKLOAD OF PLASTICS DUMPS INTO OCEAN PER MINUTE PER DAY,' SAYS UN PRESIDENT THOMSON**



H.E. Ambassador Peter Thomson, President of the UNGA. Photo:

'Human induced problems have human devised solutions.' That's what the president of the current session of the United Nations General Assembly and Fiji's Ambassador to the UN, Peter Thomson, said in his opening address at the start of the first ever UN conference on Oceans in New York last month.

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**KIRIBATI REITERATES EQUITABLE RETURN ON TUNA RESOURCES**



Kiribati Fisheries Minister Tetabo Nakara. Photo: SPREP

Pacific countries continue to raise their voices on their struggles to obtain suitable and equitable return from their tuna resources. For a small island nation like Kiribati with a population of just over 110,000 revenue from tuna provides 80 percent of government's earning. From a relatively modest base of AUD\$29.5 million in 2009, the figure climbed to AUD\$141.6 million in 2014. For 2015, government expected the earning to be well above the AUD\$200 million dollar mark.

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**MARAE MOANA, A GIFT TO THE WORLD**

While the Cook Islands may be a land area of only 237



Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Hon. Henry Puna. Photo:

square kilometres, the commitment from the island nation to conserve and protect its 1.9 million square kilometres of ocean, echoed through the halls of the United Nations General Assembly last month. Cook Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Henry Puna, took to the global stage, reaffirming the Cook Islands role as stewards of the Ocean, putting action to words with Te Marae Moana – the Cook Islands Marine Park closing 16% of its ocean space to commercial harvesting activities.

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**GHOST GEAR WREAKING HAVOC ON OUR OCEAN**



The Kingdom of Tonga, a co-host of the event. Photo: SPREP

Discarded or abandoned fishing gear, also known as ghost gear, is responsible for at least one-tenth of all marine debris. It is four times more deadly to marine animal life than all other forms of marine debris combined, according to Pacific island leaders. At the UN Ocean Conference in New York, the Global Ghost Gear Initiative, an alliance of partners committed to tackling this challenge, was showcased with a special event led by the Kingdoms of Tonga and Belgium, in association with the World Animal Protection Society.

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**PUSHING THE GENDER BOUNDARY IN SAMOA**

Samoa had two key messages for world leaders attending the



Members of the Samoan delegation to the UN Ocean Conference in New York. Photo: SPREP

UN Ocean Conference in New York. Key statements were that the ocean could be a good breeding ground to push boundaries for gender equality, and that the lack of capacity or scientific know-how should not be used as an excuse to deprive Pacific islanders from enjoying their rightful share of ocean resources.

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**LARGE SCALE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS: LESSONS SHARED BY THE PACIFIC**

The Cook Islands event hosted in partnership with



Hon. Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands.

Conservation International – "Going to Scale in the Ocean: from large scale Marine Protected Areas to whole domain management: ridge to reef to ocean" at the UN Ocean Conference was a resounding success. The special event heard the journeys undertaken by the Cook Islands, Kiribati, New Caledonia and Palau as they worked to establish large scale marine protected areas.

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**SAMOA COMMITS TO REVIVE VOYAGING HERITAGE, AS PART OF 12 COMMITMENTS TO OCEANS PROTECTION**



Samoa delegation at the UN Ocean Conference.

Samoa has registered 12 Voluntary Commitments under Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG14) at the UN Ocean Conference in New York. These include Samoa's Community-based Fisheries Management Programme which aims to ensure the long term sustainability of coastal fisheries resources for food security and livelihoods of coastal village communities through the empowerment of communities.

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**"RIGHTS OF THE OCEAN NEED TO BE EXPLORED" – COOK ISLANDS PRIME MINISTER**



Nu'utele Island, Falefa Bay, Samoa © Stuart Chape

The Cook Islands has growing support in its call to explore the rights of the ocean as a legal person, during the UN Ocean Conference in New York last month. At the very first UN conference focussed on bringing the world together to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water, the island nation of the Cook Islands amplified its appeal for the Ocean to have legally enforceable rights to "exist, flourish and evolve".

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**FIJI RENEWS CALL FOR BOLD GLOBAL ACTION ON OCEANS**



Fiji's Prime Minister, Voreqe Bainimarama renewed his global call for action on oceans – with a particular call on Pacific islanders to join the fight to save the seas and oceans.

"While we in the Pacific await global response, we must do what we can ourselves. We must make a much greater effort to work together among ourselves to confront the challenge we collectively face."

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**WHY ARE MARINE PROTECTED AREAS AND SANCTUARIES IMPORTANT?**



The statement made by the Minister in Assistance, Hon. F. Umiich Sengebau, Minister of Natural Resources, Environment & Tourism, Republic of Palau at the 'Pacific Voyage – Our Ocean, Our People, Our Pacific' side event held on World Ocean Day, during the UN Ocean Conference.

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**FIJI COMMITS TO CONSERVATION OF ALL SHARK AND RAY SPECIES WITHIN THEIR WATERS**

Fiji announced their commitment to the conservation



L-R Mr Kosi Latu Director General of SPREP, Prime Minister of Fiji Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama

and management of all species of sharks and rays and their critical habitats within Fiji waters at the UN Ocean Conference in New York. This was one of 16 different voluntary commitments to help action Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water now submitted in the UN Ocean Conference Registry.

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**OUR OCEAN, OUR PEOPLE, OUR PACIFIC**



"The Pacific Voyage – Our Ocean, Our People, Our Pacific" event hosted by SPREP and partners at the UN Ocean Conference began with the gifting of framed photographs to the co-President of the Conference. In recognition of their role as co-Presidents of the UN Ocean Conference, the Prime Minister of Fiji and the Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden were presented with framed images of the Pacific islands taken by photographer and SPREP Director – Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management, Mr Stuart Chape.

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**WAR WRECKS THREATEN OUR OCEAN, SAYS MARSHALL ISLANDS**



Marshall Islands want more work done on clearing its oceans of the wrecks and debris of World War II. Foreign Minister John Silk says it is the hope of his administration that the risks posed by such wrecks including unexploded ordinances would be addressed. Salik was speaking at a side-event the Pacific regional environmental agency, SPREP, organised as part of the UN Ocean Conference at the New York headquarters of the United Nations last month.

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**THE UN OCEAN CONFERENCE**

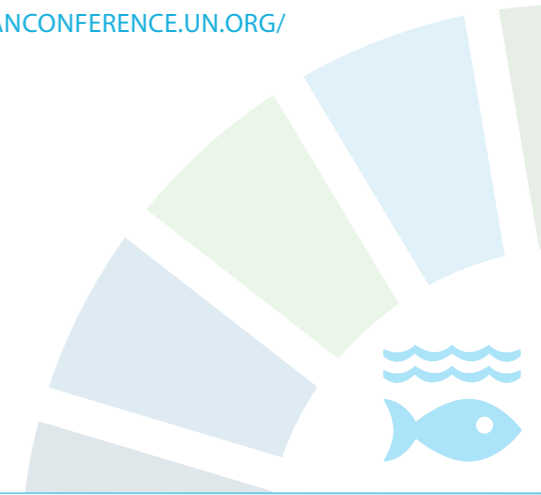
The event resulted in the Call for Action document, as well as



over 1,300 voluntary commitments for Ocean action in the Pacific islands.

To find out more of the outcomes for the UN Ocean Conference please visit:

[HTTPS://OCEANCONFERENCE.UN.ORG/](https://oceanconference.un.org/)



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