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FOURTH MEETING OF THE SIGNATORIES TO
THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR
THE CONSERVATION OF CETACEANS AND THEIR
HABITATS IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS REGION

5-6 August 2021, *Online*

WHALES IN A CHANGING OCEAN



Whales in a Changing Ocean

NUKU'ALOFA, TONGA • 4-6 APRIL 2017



Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference Report 4-6 April 2017



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- The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga
- The Auckland Institute of Studies
- The Government of Sweden
- The Government of New Zealand
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- 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

Executive Summary

To celebrate the Year of the Whale in the Pacific Islands, the Government of Tonga hosted a regional conference, Whales in a Changing Ocean, in Nuku'alofa, 4-6 April 2017. The conference was organised by SPREP, the Auckland Institute of Studies and the Tongan Government, and was supported by the Governments of Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand, the European Union, and a number of other generous donors. Sixteen governments were represented at the conference, three at Ministerial level and the others at the senior official level. Both regional and international NGOs participated in the conference, as well as experienced researchers and whalewatch operators. The conference was chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Tonga, Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, and the Tongan Minister of Fisheries, the Hon. Semisi Fakahau.

The key outcomes of the conference included:

1. Commitment to adopt and sign the Pacific Islands 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.

The conference featured keynote presentations to background participants on the status and trends of whales in the Pacific islands region, and government representatives negotiated the final text of the Year of the Whale Declaration on Whales in the Pacific islands, which was signed by eleven countries.

Working groups discussed three main themes:

- Development of best practice whale-watching
- Collaboration on scientific research
- Addressing emerging threats

Each working group was required to summarise its conclusion in a single recommendation, which became the Outcomes Document for the conference.

Country representatives also negotiated the text of a Voluntary Commitment which will be presented at the UN Oceans Conference, June 2017. The Voluntary Commitment is open for signature by any country or organisation that wishes to play an active role in supporting the future conservation of whales in the Pacific islands.

SPREP wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the partners and participants who made Whales in a Changing Ocean such a successful event, and acknowledges in particular the contribution of the Government of Tonga for their gracious hosting and their commitment and attention to detail.

Summary of Proceedings

Day 1: Tuesday 04 April 2017

1. The conference opened with formalities led by the Reverend Tevita Ngungutau Tapueluelu Faifekau, FWC of Tonga, Fasi-moe-afi and welcoming remarks from the Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Fisheries for the Government of Tonga. The Hon. Minister of Fisheries noted the economic and cultural significance of whales and how they help sustain the health of the ocean. To help address the challenges of whale conservation, the conference serves as a regional dialogue on the conservation and protection of whales that is informative and innovative, and to promote new and enduring partnerships between the various stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as the science community.
2. Further opening remarks were shared by Mr. Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP; the High Commissioners for the Governments of Australia and New Zealand HE Mr. Andrew Ford and HE Ms. Sarah Walsh. The key note address was presented by the Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Environment for the Kingdom of Tonga. The keynote address focussed on the commitment of Tonga to the protection and conservation of whales and the cultural, economic and ecological significance of whales to the history and future of Tonga. It was noted by the Acting Prime Minister that for the past forty years Tonga has been at the forefront of protecting whales, as whales were once close to extinction in Tongan waters. In observance of the Royal Proclamation of His Majesty King Tupou IV in 1978, the Acting Prime Minister re-affirmed that all Tongan waters are declared a sanctuary for whales. The ban against the hunting and killing of whales in Tongan waters remains in force. The Kingdom of Tonga will persevere with its commitment to providing sanctuary to, and protection of, whales.
3. The Hon. Semisi Sika, Minister of Tourism for the Government of Tonga presented the vote of thanks, acknowledging the important role of the Acting Prime Minister and the Director General of SPREP in jointly hosting the conference in Tonga. The Hon. Minister of Tourism noted the importance of whales for the community, including whale watching which is a multimillion dollar industry in Tonga. The Hon. Minister further noted that whales are Pacific island treasures and serve a vital role in the health of the ocean. Appreciation was conveyed to participants for their support on whale conservation and for demonstrating regional commitment with their presence in Tonga. The Hon. Minister concluded that in a changing ocean, people of the Pacific will ensure future generations continue to protect whales, and that Tonga is at the frontline, given the strong cultural, economic and environmental significance of whales.
4. The Director General of SPREP Mr. Kosi Latu noted that the opening remarks highlight the importance of whale conservation and links to economic benefits through whale watching for Pacific communities, particularly in Tonga. The commitment by the Kingdom of Tonga to a whale sanctuary is an opportunity for the region which other countries may wish to replicate. The diverse assembly of Ministers, Government officials, the private sector from the tourism and whale watching industry, NGOs, researchers and scientists, provides an opportunity for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience through plenary and working group sessions.
5. The Director General informed the meeting that it is planned that a Year of the Whale Declaration will be signed along with a Voluntary Commitment on Whales which will feed into the UN Oceans Conference, to be co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden in New York in June. This will build on the regional preparatory meeting hosted in March by the Government of Fiji and the Office of the Pacific Ocean Commissioner.
6. The Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment for the Government of Samoa acknowledged the importance of the conservation of whales in the region. The Government of Samoa has declared its EEZ as a national marine sanctuary for dolphins and whales which enables Samoa

to manage and conserve marine wildlife. Samoa supports an outcomes document for strategic partnerships with emphasis on scientific research which addresses emerging issues and threats aligning multisector approaches and mechanisms; leveraging additional resources; access to data information systems; and places importance on implementation of national policies through the control of marine pollution from land based pollution. Climate change is also recognised as a key issue. Samoa is ready to dedicate their efforts to whale conservation and will be present at the UN Oceans Conference meeting in June, 2017.

7. The Hon. Kiriau Turepu, Minister of Environment for the Government of the Cook Islands noted the Cook Islands has recorded 26 species of cetaceans in its waters, which has increased since 2007, due to the research and efforts of government and in particular Ms. Nan Hauser of the Cook Islands Whale Research Centre. The Cook Islands in 2001 declared its entire EEZ, an area of almost 2 million square kilometres, as a Sanctuary for Whales. This ensures the 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 Cook Islands waters. The Cook Islands are currently developing the necessary legislative framework to formalise the declaration and regulate human interactions with whales. The Cook Islands has also declared its entire EEZ as a Marae Moana – Marine Park.
8. The Hon. Semisi Sika, Minister of Tourism for the Government of Tonga noted that 2017 is the Year of Sustainable Tourism which aligns closely with the whale watching industry and the conservation efforts of whales in the region. The whale watching industry started in Tonga in the early 1980s following the Royal Proclamation in 1978. The first workshop for whale watching operators was held in Vava'u, supported by partners including SPREP. Tonga is listed as one of the best sites for responsible whale watching and recognised as a leading whale watching destination in the region. There are currently 36 whale watching operators in Tonga of which 22% are locally owned. Whale watching and whale swimming regulations were passed four years ago, and there is a need to update the regulations to clarify the role and process for enforcement of regulations on businesses operating in Tonga. The Kingdom of Tonga supports efforts for longer term sustainability of whale watching, which is an important industry for sustainable tourism, the economy and the environment.
9. Mr. Ryan Wulff, Acting Commissioner for the United States to the IWC thanked the Government of Tonga for generously hosting the conference. Mr. Wulff shared examples of initiatives taken by the US which range from continuing to overlay maps for coastal soundscapes to mitigate ocean noise; rerouting shipping lanes based on whale location data; preventing entanglement of whales by working with the various stakeholders, including shipping and fishermen; and expanding responsible whale watching practices. The US currently chairs the standing working group at the IWC for responsible whale watching practice. It is important to co-ordinate and learn from the conference what is happening in the Pacific and what the Pacific aspires to achieve. The US is interested in working with regional and international partners, and strengthening partnerships in the region.
10. Mr. Fakavae Tomia, Secretary to the Government of Tuvalu acknowledged the work of Pacific Leaders at the PSIDS Preparatory Meeting in Suva, Fiji on ocean governance and development of frameworks to manage conservation and oceans management in the lead up to the UN Oceans Conference in New York. It was viewed as important to maintain the momentum for deliberations this week. Tuvalu in addressing the issues on Oceans restated its commitment to: a global ban on use of micro-beads and micro plastics; establishing marine protected areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction; on SDG Target 14.4, nations to ratify the legally binding Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate IUU Fishing (PSMA); and all coastal nations to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all sea mounts within the EEZ, and to establish a ban on deep sea bed trawling on all seamounts in areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction. Tuvalu further stated their commitment for the global community to act on climate change particularly for support on a Pacific Island Climate Change Insurance Facility and for the consideration of a legal agreement to give protection to people displaced by the impacts of climate change.
11. Mr. Mikaele Fatia, Director of Fisheries for Tokelau noted in April 2010, the late Faipule Foua Toloa, Ulu o Tokelau announced Tokelau's intention to declare a national whale sanctuary in Tokelau's EEZ of 290,000

square kilometres. In 2011 Faipule Toloa made the Tokelau Whale Sanctuary a commitment to the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Pacific Oceanscape, an initiative also endorsed by Tokelau. The values behind the marine sanctuary include: to conserve migratory species; help threatened species to recover; help maintain/improve marine biodiversity; protect marine ecosystems by identifying and managing threats; support and develop the nature tourism industry; and attract support for education and research. At the 2010 meeting of the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium, support was pledged to Tokelau to assist in identifying and managing marine mammals in their waters. SPREP and partnering NGOs are also able to provide support and technical advice to Tokelau in implementing the research and education values of the sanctuary.

- 12.** Ms. Fiafia Rex, Ridge to Reef Project Manager for the Government of Niue and Founder of the Niuean NGO Oma Tafua, conveyed sincere appreciation to the Government of New Zealand for the announcement to provide funding for Oma Tafua to conduct humpback whale research in Niue. Ms. Rex noted the importance of the Year of the Whale Campaign and the need for effective legislation and regulations to support whale conservation and the whale watching industry. The issue of plastics in oceans is a problem and support for efforts within the region to address the problem is crucial. It was noted that the importance of recognising the status of whales – that they are still endangered but to celebrate their recovery, as much work has been done on sanctuaries and needs to continue. Global action is needed – for concrete measures on the ground, and contribution as a region is important. Niue established whale watching regulations in 2016, supported with the first enforcement training workshop for Niue and the region, bringing together all relevant stakeholders such as the Niue Customs, Crown Law, Immigration, Maritime Transport, Police and Fisheries and Environment so that they are familiar with the regulations such as distances, and what to do for monitoring and compliance purposes.
- 13.** Ms. Amy Laurenson, New Zealand Commissioner to the IWC emphasised the importance of the conference being an innovative opportunity for the region to work together. A key issue is the conservation of whales and dolphins and to improve the linkages on how approaches are made on conservation with a common resource. New Zealand has been involved in various initiatives, including for example: Dr. Kim Goetz, of NIWA leading a project on acoustic monitoring in the Cook Strait which includes vessel tracking and impacts of storm events on marine mammals; funding research trips to Antarctica to learn more about whales; and supporting humpback whale research in Niue. Emerging threats on whales and dolphins include ocean acidification and marine debris. There are also emerging opportunities in whale watching, in which New Zealand has over 30 years' experience and is still learning more about the impacts on marine mammals in determining what is best practice. The importance of working with all stakeholders was noted, including tourism and civil society, to ensure linkages of economic benefits to local communities. New Zealand wants to learn from others present noting IWC is well represented. Whale watching guidelines of IWC are being developed and need to be contextualised to include the Pacific.
- 14.** Ms. Soumynie Kartadiwirja, Chief of Staff for the Hon. Anthony Lecren, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development for the Government of New Caledonia conveyed the sincere appreciation of the Hon. Minister to the Government of Tonga and SPREP for hosting such an important conference. Ms. Kartadiwirja noted the importance of whales to the Kanak culture and the crucial role of incorporating traditional knowledge in management practices. The Kanak have linked marine biodiversity to traditional knowledge and this notion must be preserved and transmitted to future generations. Since 2014, New Caledonia has created a Natural Park of the Coral Sea covering its entire EEZ of approximately 1.3 million square kilometres. The park has a management committee, composed of four pillars of institutional, customary, socio-professional and representatives of civil society, which collectively is currently developing a management plan for the park. The committee works in close partnership with the three provinces of New Caledonia and neighbouring countries of Australia, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.
- 15.** Ms. Fanny Martre, Director of Environment for the Government of French Polynesia noted that marine mammals are protected marine species which are a part of French Polynesian cultural and natural heritage. Marine mammals have an essential role in the functioning and preservation of the marine ecosystem. Conscious of the threats which weigh on marine mammals, French Polynesia set up a marine sanctuary and regulation on all of its EEZ of 5.5 million square kilometres, making the territorial waters

one of the largest sanctuaries in the world. French Polynesia established its own Action plan where the Environment Department (Direction de l'Environnement) makes actions every year for the protection of marine mammals including: information, raising awareness, education and communication; capacity building and research; reduction of the threats; and regulations and tourism.

16. Ms. Eleni Tokaduadua, Principal Environment Officer, Environment Department for the Government of Fiji conveyed appreciation to the Government of Tonga for the hospitality and hosting of the conference. The Fijian government declared its waters a Whale Sanctuary in March, 2003. Fiji are co-chairing the UN Oceans Conference in New York with the Government of Sweden in June. Whales have a respected cultural value for the Fijian people, who highly regard the sperm whale tooth or *tabua* as a symbol of genuine commitments or to reciprocate heartfelt gestures. Past historical data shows that whales were once 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 was identified as a critical breeding and calving ground for the endangered Oceania humpback population. 18 species of cetaceans have also been confirmed in Fiji waters including some that are Threatened species identified in the IUCN Red List. Fiji recognises the important roles people and communities play, and the technical contributions of NGOs in supporting national development in the areas of oceans and cetacean management in Fiji waters. Fiji recognises the importance of collaboration within the Pacific in its continued efforts to strengthen and generate more awareness and build stronger networks with expert groups, and sharing lessons from budding whale watching industries.
17. Mr. Nick Gales, the Australian Commissioner to the IWC informed the meeting of the global scale of work Australia undertakes with New Zealand and other Pacific partners, and stated that Australia is keen to extend regional and global partnerships. By looking after our oceans we protect our whales. By protecting our whales, we are looking after our oceans. There are good stories to be told and shared and an opportunity to enhance linkages to scientific research.
18. Mr. Percy Rechelluul, Fisheries Technician for the Government of Palau noted the need for international partners to help Palau effectively manage whales and dolphins in waters. The importance of strengthening research capacity was recognised, as well as the development of a whale action policy in the future to support the whale watching and tourism industry.
19. Mr. David Mattila, Technical Advisor for the Secretariat of the IWC noted its appreciation to the Government of Tonga and SPREP for organising and hosting the conference. The IWC has a commitment to the conservation of whales and includes 88 member countries that partner on achieving goals for healthy whales and healthy habitats. The IWC is guided by scientific research and provides capacity building to countries and works with partner agencies like SPREP to support whale conservation globally.
20. Ms. Christina Leala-Gale, Sustainable Tourism Development Manager for the South Pacific Tourism Office thanked the Kingdom of Tonga for hosting the conference and for the excellent hospitality extended. 2017 is the Year of Sustainable Tourism which is a demonstration of the commitment of sustainable tourism development in the region endorsed by Tourism Ministers of the Pacific in 2015. The role of the SPTO is to support tourism development in the Pacific which includes working with member governments and the private sector of the region.
21. Ms. Olive Andrews of Conservation International spoke on behalf of the NGOs present. Ms. Andrews acknowledged the Pacific champions throughout the region that have advanced conservation initiatives for marine mammals including the late Lui Bell, former SPREP Threatened Migratory Species Adviser; and the scientific work of the South Pacific Whales Research Consortium in supporting conservation endeavours. Ms. Andrews noted the significant milestones achieved in the region including the development and implementation of the last three SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plans; the 12 national whale sanctuaries in the Pacific which cover 19 million square kilometres; the Convention on Migratory Species Memorandum of Understanding on Cetaceans and their Habitats in the Pacific Islands Region; and Pacific regional guidelines for whale and dolphin watching which was developed in 2008 by 13 countries with the support of Australia and SPREP and was later replicated in the Caribbean. All of these milestones have been achieved through enduring partnerships with NGOs. It is important to aspire for meaningful partnerships and to include communities and actions which will have impact on the ground. It is hoped

that the Whale Declaration that goes to New York from the conference will reflect the mana of the region and the milestones achieved in the last 20 years.

- 22.** Ms. Ofa Funaki, traditional navigator for the Tonga Voyaging Society and representative for the Okeanos Foundation for the Sea, shared the experience of traditional navigation and its contribution to sustainable tourism. The importance of promoting fossil fuel-free voyaging of the vaka with less noise and disturbance to whales and marine resources, as well as minimising marine pollution which affects the health of whales.
- 23.** Mr. Lolesio Lui, President of the Vava'u Tourist Association acknowledged the support of the Government of Tonga and appreciation for the hosting of the conference. The importance of partnerships for the protection of whales was viewed as a priority which will enhance the whale watching industry for Vava'u and Tonga.
- 24.** The key note presentations were made by Mr. Nick Gales, Australian Commissioner for the International Whale Commission on 'Whales in the 21st century' and Dr. Scott Baker, from the South Pacific Whales Research Consortium on the 'Status and trends of whales and dolphins in Oceania'. Refer to Annex for copy of presentation from Mr. Nick Gales.
- 25.** Presentations were made on Pacific island perspectives on whales by Ms. Fiafia Rex, Founder of the Oma Tafua who presented on 'What whales mean to the people and economy of Niue'; followed by Ms. Tiare Holm, Founder and Principal of Sustainable Solutions who presented on 'What whales mean to the people and economy of Palau'; with the final presentation from Ms. Aline Schaffar, Project Manager for the Pew Charitable Trust in New Caledonia on 'Nearly lost them once, let's not go there again. Why whale sanctuaries are important'. Refer to Annex for copies and links to presentations.
- 26.** At the conclusion of the working group sessions on Day 1: Tuesday April 4, 2017 a summation of key issues was presented. It was recognised there is a strong commitment to work together to protect whales in a changing ocean, noting that despite modest growth of whale populations, challenges still remain. Opportunities identified included agreement to work together on the completion of a Whales Declaration and a commitment to specific and shared actions through a voluntary commitment on whales to be presented to the UN Oceans Conference in June. The need for resources to advance the status of whales was also recognised. Working groups have identified the importance for data that is up to date in the Pacific including measuring the value of whales and to build common standards across the Pacific for whale watching. The importance of developing shared governance and regulatory frameworks for the environment to protect whales was also emphasised. Understanding regional capabilities and what is required for the future was also noted.

Day 2: Wednesday 05 April 2017

- 27.** The Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Environment for the Kingdom of Tonga opened Plenary accompanied by the Hon. Semisi Fakahau, the Minister of Fisheries and special guest HE. Andrew Jacobs, Ambassador for the European Union. Ambassador Jacobs shared a few remarks on behalf of the EU, noting governance of the oceans is a high priority for the EU. The EU recognises the importance of the UN Oceans Summit in New York in June and the EU Oceans Meeting to be held in Malta from 5 to 7 October, 2017 will be another opportunity for the region to be part of. The Acting Prime Minister and the Director General of SPREP conveyed their sincere appreciation to the Ambassador noting the strong support of the European Union to the region and for their support to the conference.
- 28.** The Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Acting Prime Minister, invited comments from the floor on the revised draft of the Pacific Island Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/2017. Noting consensus from members present the Declaration was endorsed.
- 29.** The Acting Prime Minister conveyed sincere appreciation to all present for their support of the conference and their commitment to the protection of whales and the close linkages to sustainable tourism and

healthy oceans for the Pacific. Special acknowledgement was extended to all affiliated partners involved in supporting the conference, as well as the Auckland Institute of Studies, the Director General of SPREP and the Secretariat for the close partnership of hosting the conference alongside the Government of Tonga. Due to international commitments outside of Tonga, the Acting Prime Minister handed the role of Chair to the Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Fisheries for the remainder of the conference.

- 30.** The Director General of SPREP informed the meeting that the signing of the Declaration will take place on Thursday 6 April before the conclusion of the meeting at 1pm. For those governments not able to sign the Declaration in Tonga it will be open for signing until 31 December 2017.
- 31.** Mr. David Mattila, Technical Adviser of the IWC Secretariat and Mr. Ryan Wulff, Acting US Commissioner for the IWC provided a joint presentation on the role of the International Whaling Commission in facilitating the global conservation of whales. The IWC was established under Treaty in 1946 with 15 countries and now has membership of 88 countries. Decisions of the IWC are based on scientific findings. There is a moratorium on all commercial whaling. By-catch, and entanglement are large threats to whales. In role as Technical Adviser Dr. Mattila has developed close relationships with rescue networks in countries as it is important for development of best practices for untangling whales and capacity building. At present there are over 1000 trainees globally. The IWC has various expert panels which establish global best practices. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 32.** Dr. Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, of the IUCN Marine Mammals Protected Areas Task Force, presented on the role of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMA) in the Pacific Islands. The importance of marine spatial planning to map out ecosystems and MPA was emphasised. The Birdlife approach – Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) led to the establishment of IMMAs (Important Marine Mammal Area). IMMA is a tool based on science to inform management practice. At present IUCN is trying to use IMMA concept in a wider international framework, in the same way as the CBD;s Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) achieve for biologically and ecologically significant areas. It is an evolving situation which will become more intense in the future. The IWC has 50 country guidelines and regulations and this is updated annually. There is a 5 year Strategic Plan for Whale watching and the progress it can receive in its implementation. More than a quarter of the 129 marine mammals are in the threat category. IMMAs have already been approved three years ago through international cooperation. 2016-2021 Programme of Work includes covering five different regions. The Pacific Island region just began end of March, 2017 through a workshop hosted at SPREP in Samoa. Preliminary findings of candidates and review process, will become public once approved. 29 candidates for IMMAs were identified which will go through a 3-4 months review process. 16 areas of interest that their existence is important, but insufficient scientific data to support it further. These gaps will be addressed by the scientific community in the coming years. Interface for the realities of the region on science. All work is to be used for management purposes. World nations are committed to marine mammal conservation through regional and national legislation. Wellbeing of marine mammals is however jeopardised by human activities at sea with impacts by – ship strikes, etc. Need to protect marine mammal habitats through compliance with legislation and also having a clear understanding of the geographical location of marine mammals. Importance of marine spatial planning by setting aside place for marine mammals to avoid the interference of ships and other human activities. In 2013 the IUCN launched the Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 33.** Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau of the Auckland Institute of Studies presented research on ‘Training Gaps in the Tonga Whale Watch Industry’. The research surveyed 200 people on training in the whale watching industry of Tonga. Stakeholders confirmed their interest in training and the benefits of tourism. One of the key challenges for the industry is that the work is seasonal for a period of only three months annually. There is a demand for training including for operators, tour guides and a desire for accredited training modules that is ongoing. It was also identified that there needs to be greater support with training from government to address the skills shortage including development of relevant curriculum. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 34.** Dr. Taumoepeau presented research on ‘Community participation in the Vava’u Whale watching industry: A local perspective’. The research was conducted in Tongan with local operators. Most of the industry are supportive of whale watching but their view is that it is dominated by foreigners and there is a need for

licenses to be prioritised for Tongans. Other challenges identified included limited training opportunities locally, language barriers and cash flow. The importance of increasing community participation, and promoting local ownership was viewed as important. Financial literacy was also identified as a need to support the industry. Another key challenge for the whale watching industry is work is seasonal for three months annually. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.

- 35.** Ms. Lahaina Tatafu of Deep Blue Diving Tonga and 'Eua presented a personal account of the whale watching industry in Tonga and its importance to her and family as a business, cultural practice, environmental initiative and way of life. Ms. Tatafu referred to herself as an 'Oceanholic' embodying her passion for whales, marine life and the ocean and sharing these experiences with family, the local community and visitors to Tonga. It was noted that there are few locally owned businesses in the whale watching industry that operate all year round. Deep Blue Diving Tonga has been operating for more than a decade with qualified guides where safety is top priority for whales and guests. The business also supports the local economy including sharing the flow of business to others such as transport providers, which is important. Ms. Tatafu made special acknowledgement of the Royal Family especially the late King Tupou IV and Her Royal Highness Princess Pilolevu who have been an instrumental guide in supporting the whale watching industry of Tonga. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 36.** Dr. Erich Hoyt, Research Fellow and Co-chair of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation and IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force presented on the 'Global Status and True Value of Whale watching'. Whale watching began in the 1980s and latest figures from IFAW (2009) note there are 13 million people that go whale watching. Most whale watching happens in North America 37% of that in the US, and the fastest growth is in Iceland. Whale watching is now being criticised for various reasons, particularly because of the impacts on whales and dolphins and strain on infrastructure. There is growing scientific proof, that small tooth whales are impacted by whale watching. The short term reaction for large whale watching may transform to impact on these species. Three trends have been observed by Dr. Hoyt from whale watching worldwide. The first trend is whale watching has diversified – by air, land and water. This is to deal with off-season and rainy days, offering a wider range of tourist activities. This however has increased competitiveness. Other trends include problems with sound such as noise pollution, congested boat traffic which are potentially harming various species. In Tonga and Iceland there is large ocean available for whale watching and smaller numbers of tourists and vessels. The compounding issue of traffic is another problem as whales are being caught accidentally as by-catch. The third trend is that whale watching tourists want closer encounters with whales, which raises the level of risk for all involved including whales. To address these problems Dr. Hoyt notes the importance of good educational programmes; need to diversify business with new tour products and income streams; more periodic monitoring and evaluation; whale watching operators, tourism managers, community stakeholders should make whale watching a safer business; and there is a need to increase the benefits for scientific conservation and cost values. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 37.** Dr. David Mattila, Technical Adviser of the IWC Secretariat presented on 'Entanglement and by-catch in fisheries'. By-catch working group formed and coordinator to liaise with SPREP about small catches. Immediate issue is by-catch as some countries rarely report species being entangled. Passive fishing gear main contributor to entanglement. Fish aggregating devices report large number of entanglement. Long line transiting of whales may result in entanglement. Key issue is majority of whale entanglement are not reported. An online tool to be used to determine numbers of species entangled in each country. It was emphasised the need to establish response networks and continue trainings for building capacity. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 38.** Ms. Angela Martin, Director of Blue Climate Solutions presented on 'Pacific Island Whales in a Changing Climate'. Ocean acidification is expected to affect all habitats of Pacific Island whales, from the Antarctic to the tropics. Whales are likely to experience indirect effects, such as those on food webs, which are uncertain but likely irreversible. Ocean warming is expected to bring about changes in the distribution of whales and, without geographical barriers to movement, whales in the Pacific Islands are expected to move towards cooler waters. Models assessing ocean warming over the next 35 years indicate that the Pacific islands may experience a net reduction in the diversity of marine mammal species found in their waters. The contribution of whales to ecosystem function has been gaining recognition in scientific literature. Through the same life history traits that make them vulnerable, their unique behaviours, long

life spans and large body size, whales directly contribute to the oceans ability to absorb CO2 and store organic carbon in the ocean. Collaboration between Governments could promote and encourage a more holistic approach to whale conservation and management throughout their range, including national territorial waters, Antarctic areas governed by CCAMLR, and areas beyond national jurisdiction, which make up half of the Pacific Islands ocean area. Refer to Annex for text and link to presentation.

- 39.** Dr. Mark Orams, AUT Head of School for Sport and Recreation presented on the 'Economic value of whale watching in Vava'u'. Dr. Orams identified key characteristics of the whale watching industry which is seasonal from July to September; humpback whale focused; swim (snorkel) with opportunities for major draw-card; clear, warm water – but wind and sea state can be challenging; mother – calf pair focus; and has expanded from Vava'u to Ha'apai, Eua and Tongatapu. Comparison of economic benefit of whale-watching estimates for Vava'u per season of USD \$473,030 to \$497,280 in 1999 compared with US \$5,170,469 in 2009. Whales have become the predominant tourism attraction in Vava'u. Key findings note the predominance of swim-with-whales activities; the compressed peak tourism season; increasing concern regarding the potential negative impacts on whales; tension regarding licenses and management; disagreement on commercial whale-watching activities on Sundays; and low numbers of local Tongan owners and low level of involvement from locals in the industry. Evidence from elsewhere shows that whale-based tourism will not grow indefinitely. Remote locations are vulnerable to alternate destinations that are more easily accessible and more affordable. A destination's reputation regarding careful management of impacts is an important influence on patronage. Financial viability, conflict and tension is often a challenge for the industry. Management regimes can be effective if carefully designed, developed in partnership with industry and effectively implemented (including policing). Tonga as a whale watching destination is at an important transition point. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 40.** Mr. Dave Paton of Blue Planet Marine presented on 'Known and potential impacts of deep sea mining and oil and gas exploration'. There is potential for environmental impacts associated with deep sea mining. It is a relatively new technology with considerable uncertainty regarding the potential for environmental impacts in most mining locations, the biological environments are often poorly understood by comparison to terrestrial environments. There are currently no recognised international best practice guidelines for minimising or mitigating environmental impacts. Regulators, therefore, often apply the precautionary approach. Potential effects will vary considerably in their nature and extent across these groups subject to a range of factors: usage of the area e.g. breeding, feeding, migrating; importance of the mining area e.g. are marine mammals able to undertake those activities elsewhere or not?; sensitivity e.g. can they tolerate increased sedimentation, noise, or switch prey and/or areas; threat status e.g. endangered vs. non-threatened; the exact nature and extent of the operation and effect e.g. sedimentation highly localised; and operational noise only a little above ambient. New Zealand Code of Conduct for minimising the impact on marine mammals from seismic surveys 2013. Well regarded internationally with high standards of protection and mitigation. Possible management approaches include: requirement on an operator to present a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment; summary of flora and fauna in the proposed area of activity including seasonality and behaviour; sound source and frequency levels with propagation models by distance; assessments of impact expected from the activity including noise and ecological impacts; details of proposed mitigation and details of consistency with international best practice; and independent peer review managed by the Regulator but paid for by the operator. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.
- 41.** Mr. Anton van Helden, Marine Advocate for Forest & Bird of New Zealand presented on the 'Historical and cultural values of whales'. Mr. van Helden shared from 24 years' experience with Te Papa Museum in the Marine Mammal Collection and working in a bicultural context with the Tangata Whenua of New Zealand. The importance of sharing stories in a museum context not as objects but as valued treasures with layered and complex cultural, historical and spiritual meanings, relationships and connections to people and communities. Many species are only known from strandings which are an opportunity to study offshore animals. Stranding data almost always provides better diversity in information about the cetacean fauna of a region than live surveys. Strandings also provide a window into the health and status of cetacean populations. Strandings are also emotional times in any community and there are histories and cultural practices and beliefs that are integral in the interaction with animals. Mr. van Helden shared his experience of working with communities to obtain stranded whales for the Museum emphasising the importance of values which must be held and respected in that process of engagement noting the cultural

values of whales to the indigenous people of New Zealand. The values of Mana Whenua - respecting the authority of tangata whenua; Mana Taonga - respecting the whakapapa of taonga; Mātauranga Māori - empowering the Maori world view; Kaitiakitanga - protecting and preserving taonga for future generations; and Manaakitanga - giving unconditional support; and Te Marae - a place to stand and be heard. Refer to Annex for link to presentation.

42. At the conclusion of the working group sessions on Day 2: Wednesday April 5, 2017 a summation of key issues was presented. The importance of education as a platform for learning across the region was recognised. The Pacific has the potential to be world leaders in dolphin and whale watching recognising the many opportunities and challenges in the region and trends globally. The importance of engaging communities in whale conservation efforts through storytelling and understanding the diverse cultural values of whales. Across all of the work there is a need for greater data sharing and support for the science of whales and dolphins in the region to help better understand marine mammal species and characteristics. This also includes understanding and addressing critical issues affecting the mortality of whales and dolphins including from by-catch, entanglements, ship strikes, marine pollution and climate change. Emphasis was placed on building awareness on the importance of whales for people and communities. The Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Fisheries noted the outputs of the three working groups will assist the drafting on the Voluntary Commitment on Whales which will be discussed in the final morning session. Outcomes of the working groups will also feed into the SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan.

Day 3: Thursday 06 April 2017

43. The Director General of SPREP informed the meeting that the outcomes of the conference will include the signing of the Pacific Islands Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/2017; an outcomes document with one recommendation from each of the three working groups; the Voluntary Commitment on Pacific Whales to be finalised by the 21st of April; and a record of the Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference. There will also be a signing of two MoU between SPREP and the Blue Planet Marine and the South Pacific Whale Research Consortium.
44. The meeting divided into parallel sessions for the working groups on Whale Watching, Scientific Research and Emerging Threats, and a separate Ministerial and official's only session to discuss the contents of the draft Voluntary Commitment on Pacific Whales.
45. The Plenary session reconvened endorsing the outcomes document which included:
- a. Commitment to adopt and sign the Pacific Island Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/2017
 - b. Agreement to a voluntary commitment, for the UN Oceans conference, informed by the Whales in a Changing Ocean
 - c. Tonga's announcement of a whale sanctuary in their waters
 - d. Commitment for technical and scientific input to SPREP's Whale and Dolphin Action Plan 2018-2023
46. The Plenary session further endorsed the recommendations from each of the three working groups:

Whale Watching Working Group

- a. **Vision:** A world-leading, sustainable whale and dolphin based tourism industry that respects and contributes to conservation, local island cultures and economies.
- b. **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

- a. **Recommendation:** To, by December 2020, establish a validated inventory of whale and dolphin species, genetic distinctiveness and habitat use for each nation/territory of the SPREP region to improve understanding of ecological roles, economic and cultural values and better inform management.

Threats Working Group

- a. **Recognising:** our respect for whales as ancestors with inherent rights to the basic need for a species to live and thrive.
 - b. **Noting:** PICTs' 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.
 - c. **Recommendation:** That PICTs, 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.
47. The signing of the Pacific Islands Year of the Whale Declaration was signed in Nukualofa on 6 April, 2017 at the Tanoa Dateline Hotel by Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu and the Kingdom of Tonga. The signing was witnessed by the participants of the Whales in a Changing Oceans Conference.
 48. A formal vote of thanks on behalf of the Conference was conveyed by the Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment for the Government of Samoa. The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister acknowledged the excellent hospitality and logistical arrangements facilitated by the Kingdom of Tonga and applauded the leadership demonstrated by Tonga on whale conservation. Appreciation was conveyed to SPREP for the convening of this important regional workshop and to the co-sponsoring organisations that have been part of this important meeting. The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister noted the conference was informative and inspirational surrounded by whale champions – for the protection of our oceans.
 49. The Director General of SPREP thanked the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa reciprocating the kind words shared on the strong leadership demonstrated by Tonga on whale conservation in the region in particular for the Hon. Siaso Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment. Acknowledgement of the Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Agriculture was also conveyed for the strong support of the conference.
 50. The Director General acknowledged the depth of expertise, energy and experience of participants to the conference. Commitments at national, regional and international levels including the Voluntary Commitment which is an initiative for concrete actions including real and durable partnerships. The conference has reinforced the importance of science to inform management decisions and policy making at the national and regional level. It is recognised that there are significant gaps in the work that needs to be done and the follow-up from the meeting will be crucial including the next iteration of the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan. Institutions, research agencies and scientists in being part of the conference have demonstrated their commitment to addressing gaps. Not just partnerships in isolation but linkages to conservation for whales. Engaging in whale watching benefits to the community and all those involved. Emerging threats that are confronting the region such as entanglement, marine debris and climate change. The essence on whale conservation is the importance of a healthy ocean which cannot be forgotten as all are integrated to protect each other. SPREP with its Members will take key elements of the conference to the UN Oceans in New York in June including the Voluntary Commitment on Pacific Whales for donor support.
 51. The Director General conveyed appreciation to all of the participants, the convenors, facilitators, rapporteurs, conference team and the Kingdom of Tonga as the generous hosts of the conference, including all staff from MEIDECC, Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Tourism, and the various agencies which have supported this important conference.

52. In the closing remarks the Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Fisheries conveyed sincere appreciation to the legacy of His Majesty King Tupou IV for his vision with the Royal Proclamation in 1978 ensuring the ban against the hunting and killing of whales in Tongan waters. A wise person planted the tree to benefit those that will access the fruit and only the fool can cut it down.

Annexes

Whales in a Changing Ocean Conference: Conference Outcomes

Outcomes

5. Commitment to adopt and sign the Pacific Island Year of the Whale Declaration 2016/2017.
6. Agreement to a voluntary commitment, for the UN Oceans conference, informed by the Whales in a Changing Ocean.
7. Government of the Kingdom of Tonga's announcement of a whale sanctuary in their waters.
8. 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	Recognising: our respect for whales as ancestors with inherent rights to the basic need for a species to live and thrive.
	Noting: 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)



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

1:30	Keynote speaker – Nick Gales	Whales in the 21st century	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why whales touch us all and how their conservation has been one of the world’s great conservation stories • Why whale sanctuaries are important • How the participants can feed into future regional/national planning/action
2:00	Keynote speaker Scott Baker	Status and trends of whales and dolphins in Oceania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical hunting, status, genetic relationships, trends
2:30	Fiafia Rex (Niue)	Pacific island perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What whales mean to the people and economies of Niue
2:40	Tiare Holm (Palau)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What whales mean to the people and economies of Palau
2:50	Aline Schaffar (New Caledonia)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nearly lost them once, let’s not go there again • Why whale sanctuaries are important
3:00	AFTERNOON TEA		
3:15	Conference commissioning		<p>Convenor: Kosi Latu, Director General of SPREP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key emerging threats • Opportunities for collaborations (including with the IWC and other international conventions) • Conservation management plans (including SPREP Whale and Dolphin Action Plan) • Whale sanctuaries <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	Session close		
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	Opening for the day Introduction of the theme convenors	Welcome back and process for the day	Hon. Deputy Prime Minister Announce and adopt Declaration in plenary
9:25	Keynotes: International linkages	David Mattila (IWC Secretariat)	The role of the International Whaling Commission in facilitating the global conservation of whales
9:50		Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara (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	Threats and opportunities - Whales in a Changing Ocean		
	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3
11:00	Erich Hoyt The Global Status and True Value of Whale watching	David Mattila Entanglement and by-catch in fisheries	Angela Martin Whales and climate change
11:30	Mark Orams Economic value of whalewatching in Vava'u	Dave Paton Known and potential impacts of deep sea mining and oil/gas exploration	Anton van Helden Historical and cultural values of whales
12:00	Reflections and insights summary session		
12:30	LUNCH 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		
	Theme	Presentation	
1:30	Reminder of process for solution building		
1:40	Theme Briefing Plenary	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Whale-watching – what is the best way forward? <i>Co-convenors: Michael Lueck and Mark Orams</i> Collaborations - future scientific research/conservation measures addressing emerging issues/threats <i>Convener: Scott Baker</i> Addressing emerging threats – what tools and legal frameworks are needed for integrated management. What are the gaps? 	

		Individual/industry/national/regional actions required <i>Co-conveners: Natalie Barefoot and Tiare Holm</i>
1:55	Participants move to the rooms to start each theme	
		Theme
2:00	Defining the critical issues and opportunities	Each Theme: 1. Whale watching 2. Scientific Research 3. Addressing emerging threats – legal frameworks
3:00	AFTERNOON TEA	
3:25	Developing action, responses and proposals for action	Each Theme: 1. Whale watching 2. Scientific Research 3. Addressing emerging threats – legal frameworks
5:00	Progress report back conversation and networking Plenary	
6:30-7.30	FILM NIGHT - Tanoa Conference Room 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"> • Insights from the conference • Discussion of potential proposals to the United Nations Oceans Conference • Discussion of future collaborations on the conservation of whales in the region, as a precursor to the review of SPREP’s marine species programme
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 - TANOVA		

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

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

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

The most important to action	
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and viability of whales • Monitoring compliance including government support. • Adaptive management of legislation (using science and experience). • Community awareness. • Government to provide incentives for locals to participate. • Monitoring and compliance of policy and regulations.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach material for broader whale education • Researcher course • Operator association • Develop strategies and outreach material for broader whale education. • Subsidies for locals of Tonga.
Future Proofing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote new technologies to minimise impact on whales (electric boat). • Policy and monitoring compliance.
The easiest to action	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to ongoing educational programmes. • Create and enhance whale operators and guide training.
Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforce regulation, legislation and regional co-operation. • Cap number of licenses to minimise adverse impacts to whales.
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of data, information and knowledge between tour operators and scientists. • Tour operators and science - citizen science.
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
Follow-up Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review implementation of the SPREP PACPOL 2015/2020

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:**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.

Issues identified

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

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

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 'The Great Humpback Whale Trail' by Leena Riekkola from the University of Auckland, SPWRC. 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. 	
<p>Issues raised</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 2. Countries priorities may differ greatly between whales and dolphins. 3. Costs for workshops on M&E are expensive and the responsibility to pay for it can be considered for government, NGO, or patron/partner interested. 4. Need for strengthening collaborations. 5. New Caledonia reporting observations through internet email and app. Any system is usable but time consuming on data analysis and report analysis. 6. How do we deal with connectivity in the ecosystems? What is the turnover in breeding grounds and feeding grounds?
<p>Summary of priorities: Recognising and endorsing the Whale and Dolphin Action Plan</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek funding and voluntary commitments from each country/territory to establish valid inventory of Species. 2. Nominate index species – humpback island associates for trends and abundance, distribution (capture productivity); residents dolphins population [data]. 3. Promote and coordinate stranding records and improve sample collecting and exchange [data]. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 4. Regional workshops on species international branding, abundance methods, stranding. 5. Explore opportunities for citizen science contribution to WAP. 6. Connectivity of women Oceania champions, Antarctica and role in ecosystem/ energy transfer. 7. Ecosystem roles of small cetaceans i.e. this can lead to feeding habitats, their targets etc.

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:	
Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising: our respect for whales as ancestors with inherent rights to the basic need for a species to live and thrive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noting: 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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

	12. Develop response plans with multi-level engagement	12. Migration beyond jurisdictions	
	13. Develop regulations and regularly review and enforcement	13. Lack of regulation and enforcement	
	14. Enhance CMS presence in the Pacific	14. Cultural knowledge loss	
	15. Make better use of IWC	15. Invasive species and diseases - * climate change	
		16. Lack of education on whales	
Regional Goals: Group 1			
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			
Regional Goals: Group 2		Action: Group 2	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pacific region is the leader in industry best practice for whale watching 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 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. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a suitable public and easy to use platform for data sharing on threats identified. 	
Regional Goals: Group 3			
1. Entanglement	Goal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2022 SPREP hosts a repository of information on whale and dolphin 	Action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SPREP to establish MOUs with RFMOs, to develop a centralised database to 	Advantages

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

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. Fiame 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. Fiame 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 Siaso 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 Fiamē 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 32nd Pacific Islands Leaders Forum, the Cook Islands, in 2001, declared its entire Exclusive Economic Zone, an area of almost 2 million square kilometres 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 Cooks

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 290,000km². 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 kilometres. 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 neighbours 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 neighbouring 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.

Altogether, 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 Martre, 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 thé 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 ², 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 Excellency's, 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 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

1. Mr. Nick Gales, Australian Commissioner for the International Whale Commission on 'Whales in the 21st century'

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 19th and 20th 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 19th 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 30th 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 and 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.

Pacific context

- 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.
- 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.

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, 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.

- 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]

2. Dr. Scott Baker, from the South Pacific Whales Research Consortium on the 'Status and trends of whales and dolphins in Oceania'.
3. Ms. Fiafia Rex, Founder of the Oma Tafua on 'What whales mean to the people and economy of Niue'.

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 Au pito & Kia Monuina.

[End]

4. Ms. Tiare Holm, Founder and Principal of Sustainable Solutions on 'What whales mean to the people and economy of Palau'

1. Good afternoon, Honorable Deputy Prime Minister Sovaleni, Honorable Ministers, Director General Latu, Dr. Hoyt, Dr. Notarbartolo di Sciarra, 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!

[End]

5. Dr. Aline Schaffar, Project Manager for the Pew Charitable Trust in New Caledonia on 'Nearly lost them once, let's not go there again. Why whale sanctuaries are important'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/why-whales-need-sanctuaries.pdf>

Day 2: Wednesday April 5, 2017

6. Mr. David Mattila, Technical Adviser of the IWC Secretariat and Mr. Ryan Wulff, Acting US Commissioner for the IWC provided a joint presentation on the role of the International Whaling Commission in facilitating the global conservation of whales.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/role-iwc-whale-conservation-david-mattila.pdf>

7. Dr. Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara, of the IUCN Marine Mammals Protected Areas Task Force presented on the role of Important Marine Mammal Areas (IMMA) in the Pacific Islands.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/applying-the-mmi-concept-in-the-pacific-islands.pdf>

8. Dr. Semisi Taumoepeau of the Auckland Institute of Studies presented research on 'Training Gaps in the Tonga Whale Watch Industry'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/training-gaps-in-the-tonga-whale-watch-industry.pdf>

9. Dr. Taumoepeau presented research on 'Community participation in the Vava'u Whale watching industry: A local perspective'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/community-participation-in-the-vavau-whalewatching-industry.pdf>

10. Ms. Lahaina Tatafu of Deep Blue Diving Tonga and 'Eua presented a personal account of the whale watching industry in Tonga.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/whales-in-a-changing-ocean.pdf>

11. Dr. Erich Hoyt, Research Fellow and Co-chair of the Whale and Dolphin Conservation and IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task Force presented on the 'Global Status and True Value of Whale watching'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/global-status-and-true-value-of-whale-watching.pdf>

12. Mr. David Mattila, Technical Adviser of the IWC Secretariat presented on 'Entanglement and by-catch in fisheries'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/entanglement-and-bycatch.pdf>

13. Ms. Angela Martin, Director of Blue Climate Solutions presented on 'Pacific Island Whales in a Changing Climate'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/pacific-island-whales-changing-climate-angela-martin.pdf>

1. I'm here representing Blue Climate Solutions, a project of The Ocean Foundation. My name is Angela Martin.

2. First, I'd like to thank the organisers for making this conference possible, and the Tongan Government and people for welcoming us to their beautiful island, and for the great entertainment last night! I'd also like to thank all the Pacific Islands representatives who have come together to address this important issue for Pacific Island whales, culture and people, but also for the world, which would be, and indeed has been, a poorer place without these amazing creatures.

3. So, just a little about Blue Climate Solutions. Established in 2008, we are a non-profit project of The Ocean Foundation, and the world's first organisation to focus solely on blue carbon, which is carbon captured and stored by life in the ocean, and we look at both coastal ecosystems - mangroves, seagrasses, as well as the role of larger marine life, including whales! But I'll get to that a bit later.

4. I'm here to talk today about Pacific Island Whales and Climate Change, including the expected impacts on these whales, the potential role of whales in climate change mitigation, implications for the region and proactive measures.

5. On behalf of SPREP, Blue Climate Solutions and Cet Law have collaboratively produced a draft report on Pacific Island whales and climate change. We have reached out to those of you active in the region to help inform this report, so thank you to all of those who have contributed insights, pointed us toward references, shared resources and given feedback so far. For any of you that would like to but haven't yet, we would really love to hear from you and will be finalising the draft in the weeks after the meeting, so please come chat to us or be in touch on email

6. Of all the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities, the ocean has absorbed approximately one-third and continues to do so, along with most of the 0.6°C global temperature increase over the past 30 years. Although there is much to still understand, by exploring and identifying the potential direct and indirect impacts of climate change on whales, and the related consequences on whale-watching economies, we can work towards identifying solutions for humans and whales alike.

7. The Climate Change Challenge: We've already heard about the many different species of whale that use the waters around the Pacific Islands, so I'm going to jump straight in to the topic of climate change.

8. There are many challenges to data collection for baseline and monitoring of whale populations: more than half of cetaceans in Oceania, as well as globally, are classified as data deficient by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) while we can measure physical indicators of climate change, such as temperature rise, reduction of sea ice and rising sea levels, the responses of whales to climate change are difficult to predict.

9. In addition, the parameters that may inform predictive modelling of climate change effects on whales, including changes in prey distribution, are uncertain. Thus, predictions of the effects on marine mammals, their populations, and their responses to climate and ecosystem variations are highly speculative.

10. Despite the challenges, continued and increased data collection is vital to informing our

understanding and predictive capacities. Additionally, given the geographical scope of Pacific Islands, collaborative partnerships with the many organisations and researchers addressing these issues are essential to tackling climate change issues, to guide climate mitigation and adaptation strategies that benefit Pacific Island whales and their ocean habitats, and support their well-established cultural and economic roles.

11. Impacts of climate change on whales: The effects of climate change on lower trophic levels are complex and can be amplified at higher trophic levels. So these are the effects of climate change and I will outline how they are expected to affect whales in Pacific Islands.

12. Ocean acidification is caused by absorption of CO₂ into the ocean, which reduces ocean pH levels. Ocean acidification can directly affect the activity of some fish as well as, phytoplankton and zooplankton, and coral reef-forming organisms with calcium carbonate skeletons or shells. These organisms form the base of food chains for many whales and can provide important habitat for their prey.

13. Warming Oceans: Sea surface temperature is widely recognised as a direct influence on the distribution of many whale species. Being highly mobile, many whales are expected to exhibit behavioural changes rather than physiological responses, including altering distribution as ocean conditions change. Smaller range sizes increase risk of extinction, and can be due to various drivers that might not be solved through relocation, including availability of prey or suitable habitat. Likelihood of illness and disease outbreaks in marine ecosystems may be increased due to expansion of pathogen ranges, host susceptibility due to increased stress, and expansion of vectors of disease.

14. Disrupted Food Chains: Changes in prey availability due to climate change are already being observed in some regions. Food availability in polar regions is linked to sea ice cover, including humpback prey items such as krill. Krill population estimates vary greatly, and research into the impact of climate change on krill abundance is ongoing. In response to low krill availability in the North-East Pacific, humpbacks have been recorded switching to anchovy and sardines. Whales that

are unable to switch between prey may be forced to use other adaptation strategies, such as range shifts, or face extinction.

15. **Increased Competition:** Climate change could be a significant factor in increasing competition between species whose niches were formerly separated by sea surface temperature. Species with expanding ranges, or those less constrained by water temperature, may encroach upon species with contracting ranges. Climate-forced range overlaps add complexity to established food chains and compound existing threats with increased competition, and can result in exclusion of formerly dominant species from resources. Due to the complex nature of increased competition between species that currently occupy separate spaces, it is difficult to predict the outcomes of such occurrences.

16. **Anthropogenic Activity:** Changes in human behaviour in relation to climate change, called tertiary effects, are likely to result in increased encroachment of human activities upon whale habitats. Examples include human migration to coasts and relatively untouched areas that become increasingly habitable, as well as increased activities in newly-accessible ocean and polar areas, including shipping, resource extraction and fishing. This encroachment and the associated threats are expected to exacerbate the impacts of climate change on whales and their habitats.

17. **Consequences for Pacific Island Whales:** Ocean acidification is expected to affect all habitats of Pacific Island whales, from the Antarctic to the tropics. Although whales aren't expected to exhibit any direct physiological responses, they are likely to experience indirect effects, such as those on food webs, which are uncertain but likely irreversible. It is widely reported that reef-forming corals are susceptible to reduced pH, and in future, coral reef ecosystems may support less biodiversity than at present. Some Pacific Island coral reefs have adapted to naturally acidified waters, however it is unknown whether these will continue to provide suitable habitat for reef-dependent species in the event of climate-driven acidification.

18. **Ocean warming** is expected to bring about changes in the distribution of whales and, without geographical barriers to movement,

whales in the Pacific Islands are expected to move towards cooler waters. Models assessing ocean warming over the next 35 years indicate that the Pacific islands may experience a net reduction in the diversity of marine mammal species found in their waters. While temperature is a key driver behind range shifts, other factors also have a strong influence on whale behaviour, and whales may face ecological barriers to shifting their range.

19. **Reduction in prey availability** or changes in prey distribution could be as strong a driver of range shifts as temperature. Many models attempt to predict marine mammal distribution in response to climate factors, however few consider the potential and likely significant effects of changing prey distribution. Most baleen whales do not feed in the Pacific Islands waters, with Antarctic krill either their principal prey, or the base of their food chain. Food availability at feeding grounds in Antarctica is dictated by ice cover and ocean fronts, both of which will shrink with warming oceans. Pacific island whales are therefore vulnerable to the impact of climate change on krill populations. Migratory whales are expected to travel an additional 3-5o latitude further South to find foraging grounds. So, migration patterns of Pacific island whales, including length and timing, may be disrupted. Krill abundance could also be reduced due to climate change, which could result in whale malnourishment and population decreases.

20. **Further, whale species may adapt** to climate change at different rates to each other, and to their prey, which can affect the success of range shifts. For Pacific Island whales, boundaries between habitats, foraging areas, and other spatial and temporal parameters that define the niche for each species are not well documented. Thus, the potential for successful range shifts, increased competition within or between species, or altered diets, is unknown.

21. **Adding to the complexity,** climate-driven impacts will interact with other threats to whales from human activities, and so cannot be considered in isolation. Climate change is enabling human exploration and industry to expand, and to enter new regions of Antarctic waters. As a result, the potential for anthropogenic disturbance to Pacific island whales is consequently increased, including ship strikes, noise and other pollution.

22. Non-climate stressors: Existing and emerging threats to whales, unrelated to climate change, remain a factor in whales' responses and ability to adapt to change. Because of their life history traits, such as slow growth, whales are at higher risk of extinction. The IUCN red list classifies almost a fifth of marine mammals in Oceania as threatened. Accidental whale mortality, through entanglement in fishing gear or ship strikes, is thought to be the most prevalent threat to whales in Oceania and around the world, followed by pollution, including chemicals, plastics and sound.

23. Krill fisheries are active in the same Antarctic waters as whales that feed on krill, such as humpbacks. As well as increased potential for ship strikes, Pacific islands whales that migrate to Antarctic waters are therefore likely competing for resources with these fisheries. Growing demand for krill and the development of technology that reduces the cost of krill fishing are likely to result in industry pressure for increased catch allowances. Balancing conservation and fisheries activities could diminish the principles of conservation outlined in the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). In the absence of effective management and regulation, krill fisheries have the potential to exacerbate any negative ecological impacts of climate change on krill populations, and thus krill-dependent food chains, including humpbacks and other baleen whales.

24. Role of whales in climate change mitigation: So, after all that bad news, you might be ready for some good news! The contribution of whales to ecosystem function has been gaining recognition in scientific literature and support from members of the IWC and IUCN. Through the same life history traits that make them vulnerable, their unique behaviours, long life spans and large body size, whales directly contribute to the oceans ability to absorb CO₂, a greenhouse gas, and store organic carbon in the ocean. Carbon captured and stored by ocean and coastal organisms, such as whales, is termed "blue carbon". So I'm going to just show you a short video here... hopefully it works! Just a note on the claim about movement of whales being equal to wind and tides... this claim has been widely contested in the literature since this video was produced.

26. So here's a newer figure on the potential for movement of nutrients just by swimming: 80 sperm whales in Hawaii enable 60 tonnes of carbon to be captured per year. Apparently, this is for those of you who prefer trees as a unit of measurement, this is equivalent to carbon sequestered by 208 acres of US forests in one year.

27. As we also heard about in the film, whales that eat at depth and poop at the surface can enhance the carbon capture process. For example, in the Southern Ocean, sperm whales enable as much carbon to be captured as is sequestered in 694 acres of U.S. forests per year.

28. As well as vertically, whales also increase nutrient availability horizontally, across oceans, and deliver nutrients into their breeding grounds through shedding skin and other life processes. But this is yet to be quantified in terms of carbon benefits.

29. Whales also contribute to the ocean's carbon storage capacity by storing large amounts of organic carbon, passed along through food chains, in their bodies. As well as storing carbon in the ocean during their long lifespans, when whale carcasses sink, the carbon stored in their biomass can enter sediments. According to one study in 2010, eight species of baleen whale globally can store as much carbon as 100,000 acres of U.S. forests in one year. This is one way that carbon is effectively retired from the carbon cycle, and is unlikely to re-emerge as a greenhouse gas for hundreds to thousands of years.

30. And this slide is just to show you that whales are just part of the picture of how marine animals and other life contributes to carbon capture and storage in the oceans. Steven Lutz and I identified 8 different pathways, pumps and trophic cascades in scientific literature, and have included a round up of these in the Fish Carbon report – the link isn't that intuitive, so if you'd like me to email you a copy, please leave your business card/email address for me.

31. So few populations of whales have been studied in regard to their role in carbon capture and storage, and fewer still quantified, that the numbers here may seem small. However, is this just the tip of the iceberg? And what will the story be if whales were restored to their former

populations? If you're interested in answering these questions, talk to me!

32. Impacts of climate change on the Whale-Watching Industry: Whale-watching tourism around the world has become more popular as tourists are increasingly seeking authentic experiences in natural habitats. As well as impacts on the whales that tourists pay to see, climate change will also have direct and indirect effects on whale-watching operations.

33. Although many species of dolphins and whales are found in the Pacific Island waters, the industry focuses on humpbacks. Like most baleen whales, humpbacks in the Pacific Islands are migratory. They travel to feeding grounds in Antarctica in summer, where they forage on a range of small fish and krill species, and migrate to the Pacific Islands during winter for breeding and calving. Economies based on these whales therefore have a stake in ensuring the long-term protection of food and habitat at Antarctic feeding grounds.

34. Whale-watching in the Pacific islands is a seasonal economy that follows the patterns of migrating humpback whales. The whale season is anywhere between May and November, depending on the island State. Climate change may affect migration cycles, resulting in earlier or later humpback whale arrivals and/or departures, with the potential to shorten or lengthen the season. The impact of changes to timing, particularly in the shoulder seasons (those first and last months when the whales are arriving and departing), may reduce predictability of whale occurrence, which is important for both tourist satisfaction and businesses.

35. For operators and businesses indirectly benefitting from whale-watching, such as hotels and restaurants, income and staff contracts may be affected. Ongoing shifts in timing and the corresponding lack of certainty may affect the desirability of the Pacific Islands as a whale-watching destination, both to tourists and businesses, during these shoulder seasons.

36. Predictability of the weather is expected to be reduced with climate change and inclement weather, including cyclone frequency and severity, is expected to increase. Circumstances in which

boats are unable to launch, tourists are unable to view or swim with whales, or are uncomfortable, may increase. Poor weather conditions may also increase search time on the water.

37. Negative impacts of climate change that stall the upward trend or decrease humpback whale abundance will correspondingly increase search time and associated costs to the whale-watching operators, as well as reduce customer satisfaction.

38. Whale behaviour plays a notable role in the tourism experience with tourists being more satisfied with species, such as humpback whales, that are "more active and gregarious". Humpback whales breed, calve and sing in the Pacific islands, and these natural behaviours are part of the tourism draw. Whales undernourished or stressed by climate change and other human-related stressors may not exhibit desirable behaviours regularly. And climate change could affect reproductive success of humpbacks, and therefore may affect the number of mother-calf pairs. Accordingly, supporting a whale-watching economy translates to not only supporting a healthy population of whales, but also an environment which encourages natural behaviours.

39. The presence of whale species other than humpbacks could diversify whale-watching activities, and may enable year-round whale-watching, potentially creating more economic stability for the industry.

40. Research Priorities: The IUCN red list classifies more than 50% of marine mammals in Oceania as data deficient, meaning not enough is known to assign a category on their population status. Few studies focus on climate change and whales in Pacific Islands, and even in well-studied regions there are gaps in understanding the potential impacts and responses.

41. Whale migrations and their drivers are not fully understood, and so the potential impacts of climate change on destination habitats and timing are hard to identify. Long term monitoring, use of satellite and remote sensing technology, traditional surveys and assessment of relationships between whales and their habitats will help

identify the causes of potential range shifts, and estimate their likelihood and outcomes.

42. The value of whales for their ecosystem services is being recognised in international fora, however, few studies record and quantify these services. The contribution of whales to ocean productivity, removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and its storage as organic carbon in the Pacific Islands is unknown. Focused research here can enable estimates of the carbon-market value of whale conservation. Payments to protect natural carbon storage in coastal ecosystems are already a reality elsewhere in the world, and benefits shared from sale of carbon on voluntary markets, with communities encourages stewardship of natural resources. We have a few partners, including Centre for Cetacean Conservation and Restoration, and a draft project to start this analysis in the Cook Islands, and are looking for funders.

43. Conclusions and recommendations: Conservation and management strategies, such as marine protected areas, will need to address both climate and non-climate related threats to be successful.

44. For whale populations with ranges that cross national borders, international collaboration will help to identify key habitats and establish effective conservation and management measures therein, such as the partnership the Pacific Islands have with SPREP and the CMS. Collaboration between Governments could promote and encourage a more holistic approach to whale conservation and management throughout their range, including national territorial waters, Antarctic areas governed by CCAMLR, and areas beyond national jurisdiction, which make up half of the Pacific Islands ocean area. The development process for a UN treaty on biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is currently underway, and provides an opportunity for the Pacific Island region to unite with other like-minded organizations, states or regions to be a strong voice for whales in the high seas.

45. At the national level, marine management practices that incorporate climate change adaptive measures could be encouraged and formalised through customary and introduced law. Issues related to climate change, industry, ocean

ecosystems and whales could be included in environmental assessment, planning and management, or other mechanisms to consider and regulate the impacts of industry. Collaborative partnerships between industry, government, research and NGOs can look together to address the issues that face each of these entities.

46. Since restoration of whale populations could help mitigate global warming, it is worth considering that activities that negatively impact whale populations also limit their mitigation potential. Climate adaptation discussions, plans and frameworks could tap into the potential of whales and their blue carbon services, while research and projects that aim to preserve and restore healthy whale populations for their carbon sequestration services, would have co-benefits for the whale-watching economy.

47. Collaborative long-term research in the Pacific Islands region could improve understanding of large scale processes, identify likely range shifts and other behavioural changes, and inform proactive policies and management decisions, including priority areas and actions. To supplement research, traditional knowledge could help increase understanding and protection of whale species, and insights could be gathered from researchers, fishers and boat-based tourism operators on trends and anecdotal observations on the water.

48. Land-based whale-watching could relieve boat-based stress on whales, and provides an economical and comfortable option for those who are less able to enjoy boat trips, as well as an alternative land-based infrastructure to continue to provide touristic experiences to view whales in adverse weather conditions for boats.

49. While further research is needed to target priority actions and areas, formal recognition of the necessity of addressing the impacts of climate change on whales alongside other threats, and support for action, is an important step to acknowledge and prioritise these issues.

50. Thank you for listening; our contact details are below in case you want to send us any comments, insights, references for the report. There's a draft copy of the report on the USB sticks hidden in your lanyards, so feel free to review and

comment directly onto that, using track changes.
And I'm happy to take questions now if you have any?

[End]

- 14.** Dr. Mark Orams, AUT Head of School for Sport and Recreation presented on the 'Economic value of whale watching in Vava'u'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/economic-value-of-whalewatching-in-vavau.pdf>

- 15.** Mr. Dave Paton of Blue Planet Marine presented on 'Known and potential impacts of deep sea mining and oil and gas exploration'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/impacts-deep-sea-minig-dave-paton.pdf>

- 16.** Mr. Anton van Helden, Marine Advocate for Forest & Bird of New Zealand presented on the 'Historical and cultural values of whales'.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/valuing-whales.pdf>

Scientific Research Working Group Presentations:

- 17.** Ms. Leena Riekkola from the University of Auckland, SPWRC.

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/Presentation/whale-conference/the-great-humpback-whale-trail.pdf>

- 18.** Ms. Solene Derville, PhD student from New Caledonia a case study from the New Caledonia Humpback population 'How do whales react to environmental changes?'

Participants List

SPREP MEMBERS

Australia

Mr. Nick Gales
Australian Commissioner
International Whaling Commission &
Director, Australian Antarctic Division
Government

Ms. Suzi Heaton
Director
Marine Policy Section
Department of Environment & Energy
Suzi.Heaton@environment.gov.au

Cook Islands

Hon. Kiriau Turepu
Minister
National Environment Services
Government of Cook Islands

Mr. Joseph Brider
Director
National Environment Service (NES)
joseph.brider@cookislands.gov.ck

Fiji

Mr. Joshua Wycliffe
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Local Government, Housing &
Environment
joshua.wycliffe@govnet.gov.fj

Ms. Eleni Tokaduadua
Principal Environment Officer
Environment Department

Ms. Saras Sharma
Senior Fisheries Officer
Fisheries Department
saras.sharma0205@gmail.com

French Polynesia

Ms. Fanny Martre
Director
Environment
fanny.martre@environnement.gov.pf

Nauru

Ms. Mavis Depaune
Acting Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
monmave@gmail.com

New Caledonia

Ms. Soumynie Kartadiwirja
Chief of Staff
Ministry of Economy, Sustainable
Development, External Trade & Transport
soumynie.kartadiwirja@gouv.nc

Ms. Julie-Anne Kerandel
Officer
Division of Fisheries and Environment
Direction des affaires maritimes de la
Nouvelle Calédonie
julie-anne.kerandel@gouv.nc

New Zealand

Ms. Amy Laurenson
Special Adviser
Multilateral Group
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
amy.laurenson@mfat.govt.nz

Mr. David Lundquist
Technical Advisor
Marine Species
Department of Conservation
dlundquist@doc.govt.nz

Kimberly Goetz
Marine Ecologist
National Institute of Water & Atmospheric
Research Ltd
kim.goetz@niwa.co.nz

Niue

Ms. Fiafia Rex
Ridge to Reef Project Manager
Ministry of Natural Resources
Government of Niue
Niue Public Service Building
Alofi, Niue

Founder of Oma Tafua
omatafua@gmail.com

Palau

Mr. Percy Rechelluul
Fisheries Technician
Government Offices
pbrechelluul@gmail.com

Papua New Guinea

Ms. KayKalim
Director
Sustainable Environment Programme
kkalim@dec.gov.pg

Mr. Michael Bongro
Director
Special Projects Conservation and
Environment Protection Authority
mbongro@dec.gov.pg

Samoa

Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa
Deputy Prime Minister &
Minister Natural Resources and Environment

Suluimalo Amataga Penaia
Chief Executive Officer
Ministry of Natural Resources and
Environment
amataga.penaia@mnre.gov.ws

Solomon Islands

Mr. William Soaki

Deputy Director
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
William.Soaki@mfaet.gov.sb

Mr. John Kemakeza
Desk Officer
United Nations and Americas Branch
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade
John.Kemakeza@mfaet.gov.sb

Tokelau

Mr. Mikaele Fatia
Director
Fisheries
mikaeleperez61@gmail.com

Tonga

Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for
Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster
Management, Environment, Climate Change
and Communications (MEIDECC)
Government of Tonga
Nukualofa, Tonga

Hon. Semisi Fakahau
Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests and
Fisheries
Government of Tonga
Nukualofa, Tonga

MEIDECC

Mr. Paula Ma'u
Chief Executive Officer
Government of Tonga
Nukualofa, Tonga
paulm@mic.gov.to

Ms. Lupe Matoto
Director for Environment
lupe.matoto@gmail.com

Ms. Dorothy Foliaki
eritakwan@gmail.com

Ms. Lesieli Tuivai
tuivaih@gmail.com

Ms. Ofa Kaisamy
okaisamy@gmail.com

Ms. Ta'hirih F.Hokafonu
 National Project Coordinator
 Tonga Ridge to Reef: IEMP FLC Project - UNDP
 Supported and GEF financing
 Environment Department, MEIDECC

Ministry of Fisheries

Ms. Alice Helu
ahelu@tongafish.gov.to

Tuikolongahau Halafihi

Ms. Sophie Gordon
 Pearl Production Facilitator
sophie.gordon@my.jcu.edu.au

Ministry of Tourism

Ms. Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu
 Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Andrew Kautoke
akautoke@tongatourism.to

Ms. Teisa Tupou
teisaf@tongatourism.gov.to

Ms. Tupou Seini Taumoepeau

Tuvalu

Mr. Fakavae Taomia
 Secretary to Government
ftaomia@gmail.com

United States of America

Mr. Ryan Wulff
 US Deputy Commissioner
 International Whaling Commission
ryan.wulff@noaa.gov

CROP AGENCIES

South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO)

Ms. Christina Gale
 Manager Sustainable Tourism Development
cgale@spto.org

University of the South Pacific

Joeli Veitayaki
 Associate Professor
 Fiji
veitayaki_j@usp.ac.fj

INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

International Whaling Commission

David Mattila
 Technical Advisor
 USA
david.mattila@iwc.int

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

Blue Climate Solutions

Angela Martin
 Director
 United Kingdom
angela.martin@bluecsolutions.org

Cetacean Law

Natalie Barefoot
 Executive Director
 USA
nbarefoot@cetaceanlaw.org

Conservation International

Olive Andrews
oandrews@conservation.org

Forest & Bird

Anton van Helden
Marine Advocate
New Zealand
A.VanHelden@forestandbird.org.nz

GRID Arendal

Steven Lutz
Blue Carbon Programme Leader
Norway
steven.lutz@grida.no

Humane Society International

Nicola Beynon
Head of Campaigns
Australia
nicola@hsi.org.au

International Fund for Animal Welfare

Rebecca Keeble
Country Office Representative
Australia
rkeeble@ifaw.org

IUCN

Giuseppe Notarbartolo di Sciara
President & Co-chair Tethys Research Institute
& IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task
Force
disciara@gmail.com

Erich Hoyt
Research Fellow & Co-chair
Whale and Dolphin Conservation &
IUCN Marine Mammal Protected Areas Task
Force
erich.hoyt@mac.com

Sustainable Decisions

Tiare Holm
Founder & Principal
Palau
tiarepalau@gmail.com

The Ocean Foundation/Blue Carbon Solutions

Phil Kline
Senior Fellow
USA
fishheadphil@gmail.com

The Pew Charitable Trusts

Ms. Aline Schaffar
Project Manager
New Caledonia
aschaffar@pewtrusts.org

Tonga Voyaging Society

Aunofu Havea
Founder
Tonga
aunofofunaki@gmail.com

Vavau Environmental Protection Association

Karen Stone
Director
info@vavauenvironment.org

Vava'u Peoples Representative

Samiu Vaipule
Tonga
samiukv@outlook.com

Vavau Tourist Association

Lolesio Lui
President
Tonga
lolesio.lui@gmail.com

World Cetacean Alliance

Dylan Walker
dylan@worldcetaceanalliance.org

INSTITUTES

Auckland Institute of Studies

Semisi Taumoepeau
 Director of Pasifika Relations
semisit@ais.ac.nz

Anna Addison
 Senior Lecturer
 New Zealand
annaa@ais.ac.nz

Jonathon Spring
 Lecturer
 New Zealand
jonathons@ais.ac.nz

AUT

Mark Orams
 Head of School, Sport and Recreation
mark.orams@aut.ac.nz

Michael Lueck
 Head of Department — Tourism
mlueck@aut.ac.nz

Institute of Research for Development

Solene Derville
 PhD student
 New Caledonia
solene.derville@ird.fr

James Cook University

Isabel Beasley
 Researcher
isabel.beasley@jcu.edu.au

Patrick Smallhorn-West
 PhD Candidate
 Australia
patrick.smallhornwest@my.jcu.edu.au

The South Pacific Whale Research Consortium**Oregon University Marine Mammal Institute**

Scott Baker
 Associate Director
 USA
scott.baker@oregonstate.edu

University of Auckland

Leena Riekkola
Irie003@aucklanduni.ac.nz

Vanuatu National Museum-Cultural Centre

Francis Hickey
 Traditional Resource Management
 Coordinator
 Vanuatu
francishi@vanuatu.com.vu

PRIVATE SECTOR**Blue Water Explorer**

Robert Torelli
 Director
 Tonga
enquiries@buhi.com.au

David Matthew Donnelly
 Vessel Operations Manager
ddonnelly6@yahoo.com.au

Eco Reef Tonga

Teau-i-mounga Faletau
 Tonga
ecoreeftonga@gmail.com

Endangered Encounters Ltd

Brenda Cox
 Director/Owner
 Tonga
brendakaye@ymail.com

Meki Tua'kalau
 Captain/Staff Manager

Tonga
brendakaye@ymail.com

Falakiko Whale Watch

Falakiko Fakemaka
 Manager
 Tonga
falakikofalemaka@gmail.com

Humpback diving & water sports

Sofaia Tai
 Manager
 Tonga
humpbackdiving@gmail.com

Individuals

Jodi Gustafson
j.gustafson90@gmail.com

Michael Gussey

Jones Business Services Ltd/ Whale Swim

Caryl Jones
 Director
 Vavau
 Tonga
caryl.jones@hotmail.com

Matangi Tonga online news

Elenoa Gee
 Journalist
 Tonga
graphics@matangitonga.to

McIntyre Adventure Ltd

Don McIntyre
 Founder/Director
don@mcintyreadventure.com

Naia Fiji

Rob Barrel

Managing Director
 Fiji
robbarrel@gmail.com

Seed Studio Landscape Architects

Sunnie D'Elton-Howard
 Tonga
sunniehoward@hotmail.com

Tonga Blue Ltd

Suia Kavafono'atu
 Executive Officer
suutai@yahoo.com

Tonga Ocean Ltd

David Hunt
 Director
 Tonga
dhunttonga@gmail.com

Tonga Skills

Uhila Moe Langi Fasi
 Team Leader
 Tonga
uhilamoelangi.fasi@tongaskills.com

Treasure Island Resort Ltd

Mark Belvedere
 Owner/operator
 Tonga
treasureislandtonga@gmail.com

Veronica Vega Belvedere
 Owner/operator
 Tonga
treasureislandtonga@gmail.com

Vaka Vave

Diane Clarke
 Owner/operator
 Tonga
Vakavave@gmail.com

Whale Discoveries

Kaylie Courtney Place
 Manager
 Tonga
info@whalediscoveries.com

Whale Swim Safaris

Bradley Kerslake
 Managing Director
 Tonga
brad@whaleswimsafaris.com

Thomasin Lockwood
 Managing Director
thomasin@whaleswimsafaris.com

WordPower

Susan Halliwell
 New Zealand
powerfulwords@xtra.co.nz

CONFERENCE CONSULTANTS

Anne Patillo
 Conference Facilitator
 Founder and Co-director of Pattillo
anne@pattillo.co.nz

Linda Bercusson
 Conference Project Manager
 Stylus Communications
lbercusson@stylus-comms.co.nz

SPREP SECRETARIAT

PO Box 240
 Apia, Samoa
 Ph: 685 21919
 Fax: 685 20231
 Email: sprep@sprep.org

Mr. Kosi Latu - kosil@sprep.org
 Director General

Mr. Stuart Chape - stuartc@sprep.org

Director – Biodiversity and Ecosystem
 Management (BEM)

Mr. Michael Donoghue - michaeld@sprep.org
 Threatened & Migratory Species Adviser

Ms. Nanette Woonton – nanettew@sprep.org
 Media and Public Relations Officer

Ms. Juney Ward – juneyw@sprep.org
 Shark and Ray Conservation Officer

Ms. Audrey Brown-Pereira –
audreyp@sprep.org
 Executive Officer