

## **Regional Fisheries Ministerial Meeting**

**26 – 27 August 2020**

### **Niue: Country Statement**

Fakalofa lahi atu ke he higoa he Iki ha tautolu ko Iesu Keriso. Fakaue ke he haana takitakiaga kua liu feleveia a tautolu he aho nei ke lata ia mo e tau fono mahuiga ke lata ia ma e tau levekiaga he tau koloa tufugatia he tofia.

Honorable Prime Minister, Honorable Ministers, Heads of delegations, Heads and representatives of CROP agencies, officials, ladies and gentlemen. It is good to see familiar faces in this virtual meeting. The majority of us met earlier in the month for the Forum Fisheries Ministerial Meeting. Whilst preference would be to meet face to face, we have to make do with this platform for now and hope our current circumstances will improve soon.

Chair, I attended the special Regional Fisheries Ministerial Meeting last year in Pohnpei, FSM and I am happy to be here today for its first meeting. These virtual meetings are our new norm and I am getting used to talking to a computer. It is not ideal but it is our current reality; and it is one that is becoming very challenging, especially when you have a small administration because our first priority is our national work. However, in saying that, we still need to maintain our regional and international presence.

The portfolio I hold is quite broad and crosscutting. In addition to the fisheries portfolio, I am also responsible for Climate Change, environment and marine pollution. Therefore, seeing all these areas reflected in the agenda is a clear indication that the regional work and priorities for the fisheries and marine sector require greater coordination to minimize duplication and pooling all the available resources so we are moving forward and our crop organisations are working together and not competing against each other especially when it comes to chasing after donor funds.

Niue has been very busy over the last 12 months, particularly in the oceanic/offshore fisheries sector at the regional level and at the national level with our marine spatial planning work. Earlier this year in April, Niue Cabinet approved the regulations to formally established our large scale marine protected area comprising 40% of Niue's EEZ now known as Niue Moana Mahu.

This is a significant achievement following 3 years of intensive work by our team and support from our regional organisations and international partners.

On behalf of the Government of Niue, I would like to thank FFA and SPC for the assistance and support provided, particularly with the development of our Compliance Strategy. I would also like to acknowledge with appreciation the ongoing support by SPC towards the marine socio-economic survey and trialing of electronic reporting and monitoring. We have recently received the equipment and our fisheries division is working closely with the Niue Fisheries Association to roll out this program.

Chair, Coastal fisheries data is limited and our aim is to improve this area. We did receive support a few years ago however due to staff turnover, progress made was suspended. We are currently addressing this challenge and are promoting the fisheries or marine sector at schools and through fishing competitions targeting women and youth.

Last week, our senior primary school students have launched their campaign, on protecting Niue and the Pacific against climate change. These video clips have gone viral on social media; most have touched on the need to protect the reef and the ocean. They have clearly demonstrated what can be achieved with no or limited budget can be achieved. Their message is simple but very clear and powerful.

Chair, we are pleased to be part of the new proposed project on climate change and fisheries; we look forward to progressing that through once the green lights are provided from Green Climate Finance (GCF) on the revised concept note.

Chair, in recent months, we have witnessed a high number of FADs and/or ghost fishing gears washed up on the reef, especially on the East coast of Niue. Our east coastline is very rugged and retrieval of these abandoned fishing gears can only be done by sea. Some have washed up ashore and taken resident on remote scattered sandy areas. Not only are these harmful to marine life, there is also the safety aspect to avoid accidents. We note that there are existing conservation and management measures at the WCPFC level to address these concerns. We also note that the Parties to the Nauru Agreement (PNA) has taken the lead role to monitor and track FADs.

Our key concern include is the adverse impact of these FADs especially on marine life and species. If these are tracked, we can identify the owners to assist

with the clean-up. It is only fair that they contribute towards the costs of retrieving these debris that washed up on our reefs and shores.

Our other concern is that the drifting FAD materials and gear abandoned at sea may also affect the movement of pelagic fish species within our EEZ and it will be ideal to look more closely into this in depth or research work.

Chair, we also note the work that FFA have recently undertaken to ensure safety of those working in the fisheries sector during this pandemic with the development of safety protocols. This work is not reflected in the agenda but we want to congratulate the FFA DG and the Secretariat including everyone who contributed to compile the information. Niue do not receive any fisheries vessels but we are expecting a patrol boat from Cook Islands to call in for a refuel. The safety protocol will be used with the national protocols to ensure safety of all staff who will be involved.

Chair, at this juncture, I would like to thank Cook Islands for the support to utilize your patrol boat to undertake surveillance operations in our EEZ. The Government of Niue acknowledge the support with great appreciation.

Chair, thank you for this opportunity provided to present Niue's country statement.

Fakaue lahi mo e Kia Monuina.