Possible intervention for SIDS regarding Response Options

Chair and distinguished delegates, thank you for the opportunity to speak. Our Pacific countries face significant challenges for our voices to be heard in this forum. Some countries are unable to join as their internet connections are inadequate and they are having to join in the middle of the night. So we hope our intervention will be given due recognition.

- The Pacific Ocean is the largest and deepest ocean on the planet. Our generally small islands are scattered across millions of kms of ocean with large economic exclusion zones. We refer to ourselves as large ocean states because the ocean makes up the vast majority of our homes.
- Pacific islands people are directly impacted by plastic pollution due to our direct reliance on a healthy ocean for our food, health, wellbeing and cultural identity.
- Here in the Pacific we do not produce plastics nor do we extract fossil fuels to produce plastics and we suffer disproportionately from the impacts of plastic pollution.
- Much of the imported food we need arrives packaged in plastics.
- Due to lack of land, we are running out of landfill space and we lack the capacity, resources, infrastructure, and markets to domestically recycle all the plastics that come into the region. We also lack the collection and sorting infrastructure needed to attract offshore markets for our post-consumer plastics.
- We are beginning to return to the use of traditional materials and many of our countries are starting to develop strong legislation restricting a range of plastic imports. But this is not enough. Our national and regional actions are failing to offset the volumes of plastics that arrive on our shores (either via import or via ocean currents).
- As demonstrated by two studies published in Science in July this year, unless virgin plastic production is substantially reduced, it will be impossible to manage the plastics produced globally. We will find it increasingly difficult to manage the increasing volumes of plastics entering our region – plastics that currently enter and never leave.
- What is a crisis to the rest of the world is an existential threat for our region. Climate change driven events, aggravated by increasing global rates of plastic production, means that sea level rise and storm surges gouge waste out of our coastal landfills to deposit it into the sea.
- Our Pacific Ocean states have committed to protect our ocean from harmful plastics through our Pacific Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter 2018-2025. The Plan notes the region’s support for the development of a global legal framework to address marine litter. Some elements we wish to highlight that such an agreement will be able to provide include:
  - develop shared global objectives for preventing plastic pollution and promoting a circular economy for plastics
  - establish a monitoring and reporting framework, including harmonised definitions and methodologies
  - reduce virgin plastic production
  - share best practice and knowledge supporting actions at the top of the waste hierarchy: at prevention, redesign and reuse.
  - support national action plans that address the full lifecycle of plastics
  - detoxify the material supply chain and promote the standardisation of product design, labelling, and toxic polymer and additive restrictions.
  - establish financial mechanisms not just to assist with waste management; but importantly to incentivise prevention, mandatory national product stewardship and
extended producer responsibility schemes, to fund remediation efforts, and to support monitoring and reporting.
- provide a coordination mechanism to align the activities of various regional and other international instruments
- ensure that the additional costs of waste management in our small island developing states, do not increase the already existing inequities for our Pacific countries. Pacific countries are already bearing disproportionate plastic pollution impacts to our health, cultural identity and wellbeing, livelihoods and economy, and our environment.

Thank you chair