Mr. President,

I am honored to be speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) with presence at the United Nations, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and my own country Fiji.

PSIDS would like to thank Ambassador Eden Charles of Trinidad and Tobago, and Ms. Alice Revell of New Zealand, for their able leadership in bringing these negotiations to their successful conclusion, and we are pleased to support the adoption of these resolutions on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, and Sustainable Fisheries.

Mr. President,

The resolutions under consideration today concern the very heart of our shared identity as Pacific SIDs as both the ocean, and fisheries, serve as the foundation of our economies, our environment, and our societies.

However, in recent history, accumulating and compounding human impacts have undermined the health of our shared ocean thereby gravely threatening the wellbeing and livelihoods of our populations. Overfishing, as well as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, marine pollution, including from land-based sources, and the destruction of marine habitats, including from ocean acidification, have damaged ocean environments and ecosystems, and compromised the resilience and productivity of our oceans.

This is a problem for PSIDS and SIDS in general. The SAMOA Pathway, which was adopted by this body earlier in this session, recognizes the importance of “Oceans and Seas” for sustainable development, and further acknowledges that healthy, productive and resilient oceans and seas are critical for, inter alia, poverty eradication, access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, livelihoods, economic development and essential ecosystem services, while sustainable fisheries are a building block of a sustainable ocean-based economy in SIDS. It is an important blueprint for the sustainable development of small island states. We are therefore pleased to welcome the call in the sustainable fisheries and ocean omnibus resolutions for the full implementation of the SAMOA Pathway.
Mr. President,

Issues relating to oceans and seas are a problem shared by all member states. Oceans contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication by creating sustainable livelihoods and decent work contributing to global food security and human health, including by supporting fisheries, tourism, and maritime transportation. We, therefore, welcome the choice of theme for the upcoming Open-ended informal consultative process on “oceans and sustainable development”. The discussions will most certainly contribute to enriching the wider discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and the need for a stand-alone goal on oceans and seas. This goal will work towards restoring the health, resilience and productivity of our oceans and seas by reducing the incidence and impact of marine pollution, effectively regulating harvesting and ending IUU and destructive fishing practices, and conserving coastal and marine areas.

Mr. President

This year’s resolutions on oceans and fisheries further the important work being done on making the sustainable development goal on oceans and seas, and its targets, a reality. In so doing, we would like to highlight the important strides that are being made towards deepened international attention to the problem of ocean acidification. The entire ocean food chain is threatened by ocean acidification. From plankton, to crustaceans to predators, scientists provide evidence that trophic complexity will take a major toll. This is of major concern on many levels. For example, coastal fisheries, coral reefs and other vulnerable marine ecosystems are experiencing significant pressure from this phenomenon. The PSIDS are alarmed by the recent scientific reports. Heightened global cooperation to address the causes of ocean acidification, to finance and develop capacity for conservation efforts, and to further study and minimize its impacts are critical to overcoming this challenge.

Mr. President

We welcome the language in the resolution on sustainable fisheries that continues to work to reduce IUU fishing. In the Pacific region, we have prioritized the need to end IUU fishing, and have made substantial investments in information management systems to assist with fisheries management, and monitoring, control and surveillance activities. The Pacific is likewise on the cutting edge with regard to ensuring the application of the precautionary approach in fisheries and has used both target and limit reference points in our management of stocks.

For PSIDS, addressing threats from overcapacity of fishing fleets, inadequate enforcement and unsustainable use and management of marine resources is a priority — as is the need to recognize and provide for the development aspiration of SIDS and their right to participate in fisheries. We would also express our concern, Mr. President, that at the most recent meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WPFPC) in Samoa last week, distant water fishing nations once again, failed to support appropriate measures to reduce the overfishing of tuna. Pacific Islands had come to the meeting determined to pass a measure to reduce the overfishing of tropical tuna like bigeye tuna, which is in demand for sashimi (raw fish), but the interests of our island states went unheeded. In light of this, PSIDS intend to regroup and use the existing commercial arrangements to address the overfishing in our waters. We are disappointed that Parties were unable to address the failure of the longline bigeye catch limits, the excessive levels of longline effort, and the disproportionate burden on PSIDS from the existing measure.
Mr. President

A major challenge to developing countries has arisen in the law of the sea, namely, the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. The exploitation of, and benefit from resources by a few from a maritime area that is common heritage of mankind, is inconsistent with general principles of international law, including those on equity. The status quo is not an option. The deadline to take a decision on launching the negotiation for the elaboration of an implementing agreement is fast approaching. We look forward to the third meeting of the BBNJ on the scope, parameters and feasibility of an implementing agreement under UNCLOS next month.

We also acknowledge the contribution of relevant establishments under UNCLOS on the protection and conservation of the marine environment. In particular, we are pleased with the ongoing development of a comprehensive set of rules governing seabed mining by the International Seabed Authority (ISA) to ensure the effective protection of the marine environment from harmful effects that may arise from activities in the Area. We have stated on numerous occasions just how important the work of the ISA is to PSIDS, with our exclusive economic zones amounting to more than 30 million square kilometers and directly being adjoined to the lucrative Clarion Clipperton Zone (CCZ), being indicative of the magnitude of responsibility that PSIDS entrusts on the ISA in ensuring the health and well being of our ocean.

Mr. President,

The work this body is undertaking today is critical to the successful implementation of the UNCLOS and its intimate links to continued progress in the universal sustainable development agenda in terms of the governance of our maritime spaces. Reflecting on the past twenty years, UNCLOS brought under national jurisdiction these vast maritime expanses, and its resources that are so fundamental for us. PSIDS are proud to be all state parties to UNCLOS, one of the greatest achievements of the United Nations that provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean and its resources.

I thank you.