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**2022 United Nations Ocean Conference
Statement by Mr. Jeem Lippwe
Head of delegation**

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Co-Presidents,

I first like to congratulate you on the assumption of your office and thank Fiji and Sweden for starting us on this journey in 2017. I align my statement with the interventions delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Alliance of Small Island States, the Pacific Islands Forum and the Pacific SIDS.

Co-Presidents,

In the 16th century Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan and his small fleet entered a part of the ocean unfamiliar to him and his crew. Due to the calmness of the ocean at the time, they called this body of water “pacific.” It is the largest part of the global Ocean, and of course, at the time of Magellan’s observation, it was home to our Pacific ancestors, having settled on islands throughout the Blue Pacific many centuries earlier. Those of us who remain, wish no other home than what our ancestors left us. Centuries later, imagine what Magellan and his crew would say – or, for that matter, what our ancestors would say – if they were to return to the Pacific today, only to find conglomerates of plastic garbage, ghost drift nets and abandoned fishing gear, nuclear waste, oil slicks and ship wrecks of all kinds littering our Blue Pacific, including illegal fishing boats that ply the waters of Pacific countries that put our food security at risk.

My delegation welcomes the convening of the 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference. We look forward to the commitments that we will collectively put on the table as well as to the adoption of the declaration, entitled “*Our ocean, our future, our responsibility*” which touches on a number of important subjects on which my delegation briefly wants to reflect.

For a Small Island Developing State like Micronesia the Ocean is central to our cultural heritage, traditional practices, and the identity of our people – we are Oceanic people, and we are entrusted by our ancestors to safeguard the Ocean for present and future generations. We appreciate the focus the declaration puts on the special circumstances of SIDS as they relate to us.

Our Ocean is under pressure on multiple fronts. The adverse impacts of climate change, and related phenomena such as ocean acidification, put our sustainable development in danger and threatens our borders and ultimately the existence of a number of island states. In response, last year, the leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum proclaimed on behalf of all Forum Members that our maritime zones, as established and notified to the Secretary-General of the United Nations in accordance with the Convention, and the rights and entitlements that flow from them, shall continue to apply, without reduction, notwithstanding any physical changes connected to climate change-related sea-level rise. But we also need the international community to step up the level of mitigation ambition in NDCs in order to limit the increase in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

We also know that the Ocean provides another integral service - sequestering and storing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The Ocean is thus an essential piece of the solution to global climate change.

Seagrasses, mangrove forests, and coastal wetlands store significant amounts of carbon dioxide, and their preservation and restoration hold great potential to capture CO₂ and keep it out of the atmosphere. According to a 2019 High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy report, protecting and restoring these ecosystems globally, alongside seaweed farming, could reduce emissions by as much as 1.4 billion tons of CO₂-equivalent emissions annually by 2050.

Without distracting from the critical need for the international community to engage in deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions at their sources, particularly in this current critical decade, and without further harming the Ocean and its resources, we need to protect and enhance the Ocean's ability to act as a global "carbon sink". The scientific community has estimated that the Ocean absorbed 90% of the excessive heat generated by human activities since the industrial revolution.

But we must go further and collectively do more to conserve our Ocean and we do see a need to protect a larger share of it. In this respect we look forward to finalizing an international legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), in just a few short weeks. We also welcome the decision of UNEA 5.2 to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

In the Federated States of Micronesia we face an additional challenge. Ship wrecks sunk during the Second World War have begun to leak fuel in our waters and still hold unexploded ordnance. It is appropriate that our declaration asks us collectively to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution from shipwrecks. Micronesia cannot achieve this important goal without help from our partners.

Co-Presidents,

The Pacific Ocean is one of the last sustainable tuna fishing grounds in the world, and conservation works hand in hand with our sustainable use efforts, mindful of our dependence on fisheries for food as well as income from the careful exploitation of our fish stocks. Certain subsidies harm such conservation and sustainable use efforts. In that connection, we acknowledge the recent agreement adopted at the WTO addressing harmful subsidies for IUU fishing, overfished stocks, and fishing of stocks on the high seas outside the control of a relevant RFMO/A, and we look forward to the WTO's future work on subsidies for overcapacity, among other related issues. The Federated States of Micronesia is committed to the full implementation of SDG 14.6 on this matter, including recognizing the appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries in the subsidies discussion.

My delegation supports the focus the declaration puts on the importance of traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities. In the Federated States of Micronesia and the broader Pacific, as well as in many other coastal States and communities around the world, we use both the best available scientific information and the relevant traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to inform us on how to keep the balance between conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources. We have seen the same focus in other fora, such as BBNJ, the CBD and the UNFCCC. Science and traditional knowledge complement each other, and we will all benefit from having the fullest possible base of knowledge and information about the Ocean to guide our management efforts.

Co-Presidents,

To conclude, my delegation wants to put its appreciation to the city and the people of Lisbon on record for hosting us this week. We are looking forward to where we will meet next for the Third UN Ocean Conference.

I thank you.