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Agenda item 75: Oceans and the law of the sea**

**Statement by: H.E. Jeem S. Lippwe
Permanent Representative
New York, 5 December 2023**

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Mr. President,

The Federated States of Micronesia aligns its statement with the ones delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, on behalf of AOSIS, and on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum and we will add a few comments in our national capacity.

Mr. President,

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (“UNCLOS”) is the constitution of the Ocean, setting out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out. In this respect, we look forward to the adoption of the “Oceans and the law of the sea” resolution and the “Sustainable fisheries” resolution. We thank the coordinators from Singapore and from Norway for their work on the drafts.

Mr. President,

Let me first turn to the work Micronesia has been part of in our own region and which is now reflected in the resolutions before us. In 2021 Pacific Islands Forum Leaders adopted the landmark *Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the Face of Climate Change-related Sea-level Rise*. The support expressed by many members of the international community for the central elements of the Declaration, including several large groups of countries, is very much welcome. We strongly urge other members of the international community to give positive consideration to the Declaration and similarly indicate support.

In this connection, Micronesia has deposited with the Secretary-General all of the charts and geographical coordinates of points for all of our maritime zones established under UNCLOS. We are also actively engaging with the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf on various national submissions.

Along the same lines, last month, our Pacific Islands Forum Leaders adopted a new *Declaration on the Continuity of Statehood and the Protection of Persons in the Face of Climate Change-Related Sea-Level Rise*. Among other things, it declares that the Statehood and sovereignty of Forum Members like Micronesia will continue, and the rights and duties inherent thereto will be maintained, notwithstanding the impact of climate change-related sea-level rise.

The Declaration further declares that Forum Members, individually and collectively, bear an important responsibility for ensuring protection of our people and are committed to protecting persons affected by climate change-related sea-level rise, including with respect to human rights duties, political status, culture, cultural heritage, identity and dignity, and meeting essential needs.

The Declaration concludes by calling upon the international community to support the Declaration and to cooperate in achieving its purposes, consistent with the duty to cooperate and principles of equity and fairness. We direct this call to this body, our fellow members of the international community.

Mr. President,

Micronesia welcomes new language in the “Oceans and the law of the sea” resolution highlighting the relevance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities for the conservation and sustainable use of the Ocean and its resources. We also welcome new language in the “Sustainable fisheries” resolution on the contributions of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities to the fisheries sector as well as the challenges they face in that sector. There is growing international recognition of the relevance of Indigenous Peoples and of local communities to multiple aspects of the Ocean agenda. We look forward to working with members in the years ahead to build on the references to Indigenous Peoples and to local communities and their rights and knowledge in future drafts of the two resolutions.

Mr. President,

Now I will be turning to the work Micronesia is engaged in at the global level. We have seen important progress for the Ocean in 2023.

Earlier this year we concluded negotiations on the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (“BBNJ Agreement”). Micronesia is proud to have been the first country to sign the BBNJ Agreement and we look forward to its speedy entry into force.

Micronesia is committed to the 30 by 30 target and we welcome the adoption, by consensus, of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including its Target to protect 30 per cent of the world's coastal and marine areas by 2030.

Another important process we are engaged in is the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment. We are hoping for speedy progress and a robust and ambitious outcome in the end.

We also commend the work of Costa Rica and France, striving to finalize the modalities for the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and its preparatory work. We look forward to the early adoption of the upcoming draft.

Mr. President,

The sustainable management of our fisheries is fundamental for Micronesia and for the wellbeing of our people and to our economies. We remain committed to managing these resources responsibly, in line with UNCLOS and related instruments.

Climate change and Ocean acidification are constant threats for Micronesia, and our fisheries are not immune. In this regard, we look forward to the seventeenth round of informal consultations of States Parties to the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement next year, which will focus on the topic of "Sustainable fisheries management in the face of climate change."

Mr. President,

Much has been achieved, yet more needs to be done. Micronesia will continue to contribute to efforts by the international community to conserve and sustainably use our Ocean and its resources for present and future generations of humankind.

I thank you.