

Healthy oceans and sustainable tuna fisheries – a Sustainable Development Goal¹

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Healthy, productive, and resilient oceans are critical for the sustainable development of all members of the international community, particularly coastal and island countries. Ocean resources are essential to promoting food security, strengthening economies and maintaining cultures across the globe. Covering two-thirds of the world's surface, oceans are also integral to the planet's long-term vitality. Within this context, fishing vessels from more than 85 countries are involved in the global trade of tuna which is estimated at 6.8 million tonnes with a value of more than US\$10 billion.

The waters of the Pacific Islands region cover around 40 million square kilometers, or over 10 per cent of the Earth's surface and equivalent to about one third of the area of the Earth's land surfaces. These waters hold the world's largest stocks of tuna and also globally important stocks of sharks, billfish, marine mammals and turtles and the Pacific SIDS are custodians of a big part of this area which falls under their national jurisdiction.

Tuna are a highly migratory fish and they travel vast distances across the Pacific, passing through the Exclusive Economic Zones of the Pacific SIDS but also crossing Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, the so called High Seas. Of the 2.4 million tonnes of tuna caught in the Western Pacific Ocean, 1.4 million tonnes (58%) were taken in the waters of FFA Pacific SIDS with a value of \$2.8 billion. This provides a significant opportunity to Pacific SIDS for revenue generation and livelihood improvement and greater opportunities for future generations including through greater levels of economic self-reliance. Within that total volume of catch, the share actually taken by SIDS domestic fleets and/or processed in SIDS facilities remains relatively small and, while it has grown substantially in the past decade, could be increased in line with principles of equity and SIDS development aspirations.

At the same time, tuna resources are subject to a variety of immediate threats including illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, overcapitalization of certain distant-water fishing fleets, inadequate enforcement of regionally-agreed conservation and management measures especially on the high seas, and land-based sources of marine pollution. Over the longer term is the impact that climate change may have on the productivity and distribution of the oceanic ecosystems that support tuna fisheries, and on sea level rise and its associated impacts on coastlines, EEZ baselines and fisheries infrastructure in vulnerable locations.

Further investments targeted towards institutional and human resource capacity building in Pacific SIDS threat abatement will create opportunities for more effective resource management and with it opportunities for a broadened and more inclusive skilled Pacific SIDS fisheries workforce and the associated livelihood and food security benefits resulting from increased economic wealth generation. Such changes towards environmental sustainability and economic growth can only come about through more informed, inclusive and people centred partnerships. Effective

¹ This brief has been prepared by FAO and UNDP together with regional partners of the Secretariat to the Pacific Community (SPC) and The Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) as an informational document for Pacific SIDS in their deliberations at the SIDS regional preparatory meeting. The FAO, UNDP, SPC and FFA are committed to the common goals to manage tuna fisheries sustainably and thereby contributing to healthy oceans and improving the livelihoods and economic wellbeing of Pacific SIDS. The FAO-GEF and UNDP-FAO-GEF global and regional tuna fisheries projects are examples of global partnerships that include stakeholders at global, regional, sub regional and national level as well from nongovernmental organizations and the private sector represent an investment of \$250 million in support of sustainable tuna fisheries.

implementation of measures in the Pacific SIDS region will directly contribute to achieving six of the twelve Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the High Level Panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 Development Agenda, namely; i) ending poverty, ii) empowering women and achieving gender equality, iii) ensuring food security and good nutrition, iv) creating jobs, sustainable livelihoods and equitable growth, v) managing natural resource assets sustainably, and vi) ensuring good governance and effective institutions.

Pacific Islands SIDS and territories, have long established regional and sub-regional institutions and arrangements for cooperation in fisheries management, MCS and development. This includes strong and effective commitment to the rights and responsibilities of coastal states for the management of fisheries resources including highly migratory fish stocks, in particular through Zone and Rights based management. An important aspect of these regional arrangements is that they also address the challenges of multi-fisheries and multi-species management and the incorporation of differing socio-economic objectives and priorities amongst Pacific SIDS. Increasingly PSIDS are also challenged to cope with a wide range of international and non-governmental programs and interventions that affect fisheries management. The Support mechanisms to enhance solidarity in these fora will remain crucial to underpin the sustainable management of oceans and fisheries resources.

Within the United Nations SIDS Context and the post 2015 Sustainable Development agenda the FAO and UNDP together with regional partners of the Secretariat to the Pacific Community (SPC), the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), and the Parties to the Nauru Agreement are committed to supporting Pacific SIDS in their common goals to manage tuna fisheries sustainably and thereby contributing to healthy oceans and improving the livelihoods and economic wellbeing of Pacific SIDS. The FAO-GEF and UNDP-FAO-GEF global and regional tuna fisheries projects are examples of global partnerships that include stakeholders at global, regional, sub regional and national level as well from nongovernmental organizations and the private sector represent an investment of \$250 million in support of sustainable tuna fisheries.

While welcoming new interventions, it is also recognized that Pacific SIDS have been relatively successful in large part because of the pragmatic exercise of their national sovereignty and sovereign rights over the management of highly migratory resources, closely supported by the regional collaborative arrangements that have evolved between them over the past 30 years. These established institutional arrangements should be supported and strengthened through effective partnership with donors and other development institutions.