

The Pacific Oceanscape – A vision for a sustainable future for the Pacific
Breakfast presentation by Mike Donoghue and Sue Tai (Conservation International)

Mihi

Talofa lava and warm Pacific greetings to you all. Thank you for turning out early in the morning, and my congratulations to Gary, Raewyn and your team for organising such an excellent conference, and for providing the opportunity to describe to you an exciting regional initiative in which New Zealand has a key role to play.

My key take home message for you today is that the theme of this conference “ spatial planning for land and sea” and the related ocean and coastal policies, issues and actions needed, is as much at the forefront of debate and concern north of here in the Pacific Islands region as it is in NZ. We are grappling with many of the same issues as those that were articulated yesterday by several speakers.

My second key message to you is that NZ is very much part of these debates and concerns and I urge you to remember that NZ is part of the Pacific Ocean and part of the Pacific Islands community. And that besides the leadership role that we might expect NZ, as a technically better-resourced country, to play in the region, there are also shared interests such as highly migratory fish stocks such as tuna and the impacts of climate change.

The Pacific Islands region covers an area of nearly 40 million sq km - or over 10 per cent of the Earth’s surface - and is equivalent to about one-third of the area of the Earth’s land surfaces. The Pacific Island States and Territories are really Ocean States and they play a globally important ocean stewardship role. This includes NZ, both in its own right with the world’s 5th-largest EEZ, and also as a nation with responsibility for Tokelau; but also for countries who are in free association with NZ such as Niue and the Cook Islands – whose population are fellow New Zealanders; and more widely through New Zealand’s membership of the Pacific Islands Forum, SPREP, SPC, FFA and a range of other regional and international agencies and agreements.

As much of the ocean area falls within the national jurisdiction of Pacific states and there are many shared interests and resources, particularly tuna, it is not surprising that at both state and regional level these countries and territories are taking an increasing interest in ocean matters, both as custodians of a significant part of the surface of the Earth and, in particular, as custodians of a large part of one of its most significant marine ecosystems.

This area hosts the world’s largest stocks of tuna and several other keystone oceanic species e.g. marine turtles, sharks and whales. The waters of the Pacific Islands region provide around a third of the world’s catches of tuna and related species – and the broader Western and Central Pacific Ocean region, including Indonesia and Philippines, provides closer to half of the world’s tuna catches – around 2 million tonnes annually.

In 2009, the estimated catch of tuna (all species) from this region was 2 467 903 tonnes, the highest catch ever reported. It constituted 81% of the total Pacific Ocean catch (3 042 092mt) and 58% of the total global tuna catch (4 222 289mt).

Furthermore, the region’s coastal marine biodiversity is thought to be among the most intact, robust and pristine remaining in the world. Climate change has major impacts in the region – but although this is a great threat, it also provides a political opportunity

The ocean peoples of the Pacific Islands maintain strong and intimate links with the ocean ecosystem – people depend on the ocean for their daily lives, and ocean resources such as tuna are the mainstay of many national economies

And the oxygen in every second breath you take originates from the ocean - perhaps that brings home to you most of all the importance of this ocean - in which NZ lies.

The Pacific Islands Countries and Territories have attempted for many years to develop an integrated management strategy for their ocean, but efforts have been fragmented and lacked a coherent commitment. In 2010, faced with the reality of declining fish stocks and rising sea levels, Pacific Forum Leaders including PM John Key, endorsed a new ocean management initiative – the Pacific Oceanscape – a vehicle to deliver innovative marine spatial planning and conservation over an area spanning nearly 40 million sq km. The Pacific Oceanscape has been endorsed by 15 Heads of State, and Environment Ministers from all states and territories, including USA, Australia, NZ and France. The Pacific Oceanscape is an unprecedented agreement toward the cooperative stewardship of a vast swathe of Pacific Ocean.

CI has been part of this initiative since its inception by President Anote Tong of Kiribati in 2009 and we work as part of the Forum’s Marine Sector Working Group, which has been charged with the coordination of the Oceanscape’s implementation.

The extent of the Oceanscape includes not only the area within the 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) boundaries circumscribing these island countries, but also the ocean and coastal areas that encompass the extent of the marine ecosystems and the sea bed that support the region’s economic and life-support systems.

It is important to note that Leaders were not simply putting a definitive ‘box’ around the EEZs of the region. It is intended that the influence of this collaboration will also extend widely into high seas areas. Additionally because the Oceanscape includes endorsement by Environment Ministers, as well as Ministers from Australia, NZ, USA and France, the scope for synergy is high.

There are 3 main legs to the Pacific Oceanscape Framework:

- **Integrated Ocean Management** – to focus on integrated ocean management at all scales that results in the sustainable development, management and conservation of island, coastal and ocean services; and that responds to the development aspirations of Pacific Island countries, at the same time maintaining and ensuring environmental health and ecological function. One of the means of achieving integrated ocean management at the archipelagic scale will be the creation of Pacific Ocean Arcs – integrated networks of protected areas (both marine and terrestrial). Ocean Arcs will foster transboundary international collaboration (as with the proposed Phoenix and Line Islands Ocean Arc, and the Two Samoas Ocean Arc); they will build on existing investments and partnerships, as well as focusing attention on under-invested areas. Supporting the development of Ocean Arcs will be one of CI’s primary points of engagement in implementation of the Pacific Oceanscape.
- **Adaptation to Environmental and Climate Change** - to develop suitable baselines and monitoring strategies that will inform impact scenarios and specific understanding of environmental and climate change stressors. Only through empirical understanding can Pacific peoples develop and pursue effective, appropriate and sustained adaptation responses and solutions. Solutions need to consider the full range of oceanic and island environments; and to articulate the limits to adaptation and provide appropriate responses. Better information and understanding of these impacts will facilitate a confident and united engagement at regional and international levels.
- **Liaising, Listening, Learning and Leading** - to articulate and use appropriate facilitative and collaborative processes, mechanisms and systems and research that results in the achievement of the objectives for Integrated Ocean Management and Adaptation to Environmental and Climate Change, while mindful of the interests, rights, responsibilities and differences between partners and stakeholders.

Action proposed under these three objective areas has relevance to issues of marine spatial planning and I briefly want to address a few of these within the context of this conference's interest in "lines in the ocean". Briefly I will touch on :

- EEZs –their security (or lack thereof)
- High Seas
- Large scale MPAs – perhaps the most promising effort yet for integrated marine spatial planning in our ocean

Through this I hope you will be able to see in this presentation the significance of the Forum Leaders' endorsement of the Pacific Oceanscape.

Show map of area with EEZs shown as generally expected

These lines in the ocean are commonly used and are widely believed to represent the EEZ boundaries in the region. The map shows a scattering of tiny islands on an area of ocean twice the size of the continental USA. Although these Pacific islands are generally perceived as small island countries, they are in reality large ocean states, with very significant areas of sovereignty.

For Pacific Islands, their EEZs and their associated resource governance under UNCLOS are an economic lifeline. Income from tuna is the mainstay of many island economies and particularly for the group of Central Pacific states – PNG, Nauru, Palau, FSM, Kiribati, RMI, Tuvalu, Solomon Is, who hold the majority of the region's tuna within their boundaries. For NZ also, the EEZ generates much economic opportunity, (not only from fishing) and we hope that all countries share a strong sense stewardship of this vast swathe of open and deep ocean habitat, and of their connections to one another.

The reality, however, is quite different.

Only a handful of PIC maritime boundaries have been declared and lodged in accordance with UNCLOS as of March 2011. Only Fiji, Nauru and Palau have declared their maritime baselines, zones and outer limits in accordance with UNCLOS; while Papua New Guinea, Solomon Is. and Vanuatu have declared only their archipelagic baselines. Of these countries, four (Fiji, Palau, Solomon Is. and Papua New Guinea) are in the process of verifying / updating the data used (pre 2001) to declare their respective baselines and maritime zones. Of the region's 48 shared boundaries, only 21 are presently subject to treaty.

Given the importance of EEZs to PI economies, it is not surprising that completing this map by finalising and securing these maritime boundaries is Action no.1A under the Pacific Oceanscape framework adopted by PI Leaders. They are crucial to the sustainable economic and ecological future of Pacific Is states.

Furthermore the framework of the Pacific Oceanscape acknowledges that the effort involved in fixing the baselines and maritime boundaries should not result in reduced jurisdiction of PICTs due to the future impacts of climate change and sea level rise. Currently there are a range of views regarding the impact of sea level rise on EEZs. Despite the publication of several legal papers by learned scholars, and a series of meetings and workshops, the definitive legal view has not yet been agreed. However in terms of our region, EEZ security is fundamental.

These two issues – securing recognised boundaries and the potential loss of areas of EEZs due to climate change impacts - are two of the most important marine spatial planning or ocean zoning issues to our region right now. They are vitally important to the security and stability of our region. They are reflected in Actions 1a and 1b of the Pacific Oceanscape framework adopted by Leaders.

Now what about outside these areas – the high seas?

It is fair to say that today the high seas are a haven for fishing pirates – and that any sector's control of them in terms of effective management or governance is limited.

One bright light in this region is the PNA – Parties to the Nauru Agreement – the eight countries I previously mentioned have empowered themselves to set rules for licensing DWFNs to fish in their EEZs that include an agreement by those foreign vessels not to fish in certain High Seas areas. Some of these measures have been adopted by the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, giving rise to two of the first “high seas MPAs” globally.

The high seas, shorthand for that portion of the ocean that lies beyond the limits of national jurisdiction, including the Southern Ocean around Antarctica, make up 64% of the world's oceans and nearly 50% of the planet's surface. This vast area, once mistakenly considered an empty wasteland, is now understood to contain the largest reservoir of biodiversity on earth. Multiplying human activities, however, pose a variety of threats to high seas ecosystems, including overfishing, noise, plastic and chemical pollution, habitat destruction, and now (perhaps most critically) ocean warming and ocean acidification due to rising concentrations of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere.

We are coming to 20 years after the watershed Earth Summit in Rio – yet despite widespread recognition of these issues, still no effective mechanism exists to conserve the high seas, and more than half the planet's surface is still essentially a free for all. CI believes that in the Rio+20 preparations, the world urgently needs to agree to governance reforms that fulfil States' commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for the effective conservation and protection of the marine environment and marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, on a precautionary and integrated basis.

Furthermore, we believe that they need to establish a mechanism for the establishment and management of a fully comprehensive, effectively managed and globally representative system of high seas MPAs and no-take reserves.

Given NZ's location as an ocean state, I believe this should be a key part of the context of marine spatial planning considerations for NZ and I hope NZ takes a leadership role in its membership of the Forum through to the Rio +20 discussions in 2012

Finally I would like to turn your attention on a more positive note of marine spatial planning to the advent of large scale MPAs in our region, and the impressive recent momentum

In 1975 Australia created a new scale of lines in the ocean in the form of the world's largest MPA – the GBRMPA. At the time, this was merely a line in the ocean and it took 13 years to achieve 5% protection. Only in the last 5 years, after a massive rezoning effort has full protection in this MPA been extended to over 1/3 of the area

For more than 25 years, GBRMPA was alone as a large scale MPA, but in 2004 in a new approach CI partnered with Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines in a seascape approach – networks of MPAs, but within a larger “sea” at scale.

Also in 2004 we partnered in the Eastern Tropical Pacific with 5 states on a similar transboundary seascape with networks of protected areas, including the world famous Galapagos MPA, joined now by 2 further WH sites (Coiba and Malpelo)

IN 2005 another seascape in the heart of the coral triangle – Raja Ampat : Bird's Head Seascape - was established, with CI, TNC, WWF partnering with the Indonesian government and local communities

These 3 seascapes represented a new scale of ocean stewardship

Then, in 2006 Kiribati declared the PIPA – at the time the world's 3rd largest MPA in the heart of the Pacific Ocean.

In 2006 President George W Bush declared Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument

In 2008 Kiribati finalised PIPA's boundaries and at >400 K sq km it became the world's largest MPA.

During this time much effort within this Ocean basin has added numerous smaller sites or locally managed marine areas and today we have a dual momentum for large at-scale MPAs and seascapes, including large ocean and remote sites and for networks of smaller coastal MPAs (similar to NZ's marine reserves network).

This is fantastic progress. Is it enough? No, still < 1% one percent of our ocean is in protected areas. These large sites represent some of the first attempts at integrated ocean management at scale and we are very proud to be associated with many of these. Australia and France are discussing a large MPA within adjacent EEZs in the Coral Sea, and in recent months more Pacific Island states will be looking at the designation of large areas. NZ has a timely opportunity to join this endeavour and provide a direct link to our Pacific Island neighbours by designating a large MPA around the Kermadec Islands.

I hope that this brief breakfast foray into marine spatial planning gives you an ocean perspective, into which issues you are discussing this week for NZ's land and sea domain can be placed.

I hope NZ will soon join the "Big Ocean" club with a large MPA designation for the Kermadecs, and will continue to support the Pacific Oceanscape's work in the region.

I would like to leave you with a quote from President Anote Tong, which has been adopted by the Pacific Forum Leaders as the rallying cry for the Pacific Oceanscape. It reminds us of what is at hand and what is at stake

"In our Pacific Islands Ocean Region the ocean unites and divides, connects and separates, sustains and threatens our very survival. For all those who venture within this, the world's largest ocean, and who have made it their home, the ocean influences every aspect of life. It has done so for millennia." (President Anote Tong)