

Human Rights Council – 40<sup>th</sup> Session

Item 3 General Debate on 7-8 March 2019

Joint Statement on human rights in the fishing industry, including modern slavery and trafficking in persons

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of nations of the Pacific: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Fisheries play a key role in supporting sustainable economic development in the Pacific. We want to ensure fishing operations in our waters and beyond are conducted fairly, responsibly, safely, and in a manner consistent with international human rights law.

All Pacific nations take seriously our international human rights law obligations and commitments. We condemn the abhorrent criminal practices of forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour, including in the fishing industry.

Pacific island countries have demonstrated a commitment to action. At the Forum Fisheries Committee Ministers' Meeting in July 2018, Pacific Ministers underlined the importance of addressing human rights abuses on fishing vessels operating in the Pacific region. In December 2018, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission resolved to encourage implementation of measures to support improved labour standards for crew.

Member states of the *Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime*, including many in the Pacific, are also working alongside the business community to combat human trafficking.

We recognise the need to address these challenges in line with *Target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals*, and *Articles 6 and 8 of the 1995 FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries*, and resolve to ensure safeguards against forced labour, smuggling, trafficking, modern day slavery, and sexual exploitation and abuse. We further recognise the importance of increasing inclusion and empowerment of women in the fishing industry.

We encourage all states to take steps to end slavery-like practices in the fishing industry.

286 words