**Human Rights Council – 45th Session**

**Item 3 on 22 September 2020**

**Pacific Joint Statement on the importance of diverse voices being heard
on the Human Rights Council**

I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of 16 Pacific nations:

[Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.]

Pacific nations are committed to advancing human rights at home and globally.

A robust and effective multilateral system needs to include diverse voices and the equal and full participation of all states, civil society, and all members of our communities.

Pacific states have been working to increase our Human Rights Council participation, and we are pleased with the notable assistance from the Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States and the Commonwealth Small States Office. We take this opportunity to welcome the recent decision at ECOSOC to establish a new UN multi-country Office in the North Pacific region.

We are pleased to note that the Pacific increased our HRC representation from zero to three members over the last three years – a testament to our commitment to respecting and strengthening human rights. This historic achievement has allowed the Pacific to showcase our many and diverse voices and perspectives on the world stage.

Ensuring the inclusion of small island developing states and least developed countries, including assistance to build their national capacity, is crucial for universal and equal participation in the work of the Council. The HRC can only benefit from a diversity of voices.

The Human Rights Council, and the multilateral system more broadly, allows us to collectively address global issues beyond any one state’s means of control – issues like climate change and the response to the COVID pandemic. Climate change, and its effects on human rights, are of particular concern to Pacific states. We are on the frontlines of climate impacts, and welcome genuine and durable partnerships in support of our Pacific regional initiatives. Amplifying the voices of those particularly vulnerable to climate impacts, such as small island developing states, can help ensure urgent climate change action is taken.

Listening to the voices of diverse groups, including women and girls, indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, young people and other potentially vulnerable communities, in multilateral forums, as well as regional and national decision-making bodies, leads to better outcomes for human rights, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and social and economic development. Inclusive decision-making processes truly reflect the needs of communities.

We encourage all states to commit and positively engage in a multilateral system which actively supports universal participation by all states, and ensures all perspectives - including those of smaller or developing states - are heard and considered in the work of the Council.

[ends]

**416 [447] words**