

GENERAL STATEMENT

Distinguished Co-Chairs, Excellencies, colleagues,

Good afternoon.

At the outset, my delegation expresses gratitude to the Government of Kenya and UNEP for hosting and organizing our session. And, we join others in extending our deepest condolences for the loss of lives in the plane crash in Ethiopia and wishing a speedy recovery for others who remain in critical condition; as well as to our Pacific sisters and brothers in New Zealand in light of the recent horrific terrorist attacks.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier today by the distinguished representative of Belize on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States. We have a few comments to share in our national capacity.

Co-Chairs,

As we shared in the first substantive session of this Working Group, it is clear to my delegation that gaps do exist in international environmental law and environment-related instruments that undermine their implementation. For us, and in line with the comment by the distinguished representative of Uruguay, gaps should not be considered in a narrow manner but should instead be viewed as including challenges, inconsistencies, and shortcomings in international environmental law and environment-related instruments, including with respect to their implementation as well as their normative content.

For us, major principles of international environmental law are not defined and applied in a consistent manner across a wide range of instruments, institutions, and processes of international environmental law. Also for us, there is a significant need to achieve greater cooperation, coordination, and coherence between all these instruments, institutions, and processes. This is a state of affairs that, as the distinguished representative of Canada noted, is highlighted in the recently-released First Global Report on the Environmental Rule of Law. This state of affairs has led to significant fragmentation and proliferation of instruments, undermining the interrelated nature of the environment and the effective implementation of relevant MEAs, as noted by the distinguished representative of Mexico. We recognize and respect the views of other delegations regarding how this state of affairs might be by design, based on careful political calculations and hard-fought compromises in individual negotiations and fora. Nevertheless, my delegation stresses that this state of affairs does not prevent a concerted effort by the international community to improve the status quo, in a manner that respects and complements the mandates of existing instruments, institutions, and processes and enhances the overall protection of the natural environment. For my delegation, this is the core purpose of our efforts in this Working Group.

This core purpose is particularly critical because, in my delegation's view, there is one natural environment. As we expressed in the first substantive session in January, the interlinkages between the various

components of the natural environment are clear and compelling.

Environmental harms committed on land, in the Ocean, and to the atmosphere reverberate across all those components of the natural environment, among others, regardless of political and legal boundaries established by the international community. And yet, the international community persists in addressing environmental harms in silos, with insufficient synergies between the many, many instruments, institutions, and processes set up to deal with individual components of the natural environment. This is a recipe for disaster for the natural environment, and it must be addressed.

This is also a recipe for disaster for small island developing States

("SIDS") like Micronesia as well as other developing States, as we struggle to follow all the relevant instruments, institutions, and processes pertaining to the natural environment while dealing with significant financial and capacity constraints. The silo-ization of international environmental law is not equitable, especially in light of the fact that SIDS and other developing States like Micronesia are at the front-lines of many of the harms inflicted on the natural environment, from climate change to Ocean acidification to natural disasters to marine litter to species extinction, among many other harms. If the international community is serious about addressing all of these harms in an effective manner, then the international community must ensure the effective participation of delegations like mine in those efforts.

The question, then, is whether a Global Pact for the Environment or a similar instrument or outcome can address those concerns and achieve the relevant objectives. Can a consolidation of relevant principles of international environmental law address the numerous gaps that plague international environmental law and environment-related instruments? Can a call for greater coordination, cooperation, and coherence between instruments, institutions, and processes of international environmental law and environment-related instruments allow the international community to tackle the threats to the natural environment in an effective and sustained manner? Finally, what is the proper process for addressing those concerns and achieving those relevant objectives, so that we do our work in a comprehensive manner without weakening existing arrangements and principles (as noted by the distinguished representative of Australia), but also with a sense of urgency, in light of the proliferation of harms to the natural environment? My delegation welcomes the opportunity to discuss these and other questions during the rest of this week and pledges our full support to your work, Co-Chairs. As Acting Executive Director Msuya stated this morning, we have just one planet. We need to use international environmental law effectively so that the planet not only survives but thrives.

Thank you, Co-Chairs.