

Statement from the Collective Thinking on the Rights of the Pacific Ocean

This statement was created at a gathering in Auckland, New Zealand on 19 and 20 November 2018, titled “A feasibility study on rights of the Pacific Ocean”. Those gathered agreed on a shared vision for the future, and to work towards sharing this thinking and expanding the knowledge of Ocean Kinship.

We are the Ocean and the Ocean is us. The Ocean is our source of life, our family and blood. All Earth’s systems and beings are related and interdependent. The Ocean has authority (mana) and life force (mauri).

The Ocean is foundational to all life. We can address the fundamental changes needed if we respect the Ocean and all she contains. At no time in human history has this been needed more, with overfishing, climate change, plastics and pollution cumulatively impacting her health.

We have a responsibility and obligation to conserve, protect and defend the rights of the Ocean; the rights of past, present and future generations of all beings rely on respect for the rights of the Ocean.

The Ocean is not property or a resource, nor solely here for human benefit. We do not own the Ocean. She is an entity, with rights including but not limited to: the right to exist, thrive and evolve, the right to integral health, the right to be free of pollution and a healthy, functioning climate system, the right to restoration and regeneration, and to continue her vital functions and cycles.

Despite the multitude of laws designed to protect and conserve the Ocean, the dominant anthropocentric values, and legal and economic frameworks and practices, have resulted in escalating degradation. We aim to accelerate a transformational shift in our behavioral, societal, legal, governance and economic relationships in order to live in harmony with the Ocean.

We acknowledge our KINSHIP with the Ocean. We must shift from rights to the ocean towards responsibilities and obligations to the Ocean.

And so, we must consider the rights of the ocean. For just as those who have been treated unfairly have found it necessary to claim their rights, so too has the ocean been treated with injustice and disrespect. And so now we find it necessary to enable the ocean to claim its rights...” Henry Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands

We emphasize that our governance systems must recognize and protect the rights of the Ocean in a culturally appropriate way that builds on, and is compatible with, the shared values and beliefs of Pacific peoples. In light of the recognition of the Oceans rights, we acknowledge the Ocean is a living being and that we are her guardians.

We commit to advancing this paradigm shift, to promoting the above principles and to making them foundational to our work. We invite all of the Ocean’s representatives and stakeholders to be a part of this endeavor, and to share these principles at local, regional and global scales.

If you are interested in working together on a draft Convention for the Rights of the Pacific Ocean please contact Victor David at victor.david@ird.fr.

Those present at the Auckland Gathering:

Andrews Olive	Conservation International (CI) NZ & Pacific Islands
Bender Michelle	Earth Law Center (USA)
Beziac Carole	Tevaha Stories
Cabanes Valerie	Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, Europe
Cuneo Esther	Les Nouvelles Calédoniennes
David Victor	Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)-New Caledonia
Evans Jacqui	Office of Prime Minister, Cook Islands
Govan Hugh	LMMA/University of South Pacific, Fiji
Hikuroa Dan	University of Auckland
Maloney Michelle	Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA)
Moizo Bernard	IRD-France
Mori Luca	Conservation International (CI) NZ & Pacific Islands
Peteru Clark	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme SPREP
Qu Zoe	PhD student, University of Auckland
Taei Sue	Conservation International (CI) NZ & Pacific Islands
Taylor Lara	Manaaki Whenua - Land care research NZ
Taylor Prue	NZ Centre for Environmental Law
Tcherkezoff Serge	ANU/Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales
Thatcher Jack	'Ngahiraka Mai Tawhiti voyaging waka'
Tremlett James	'Ngahiraka Mai Tawhiti voyaging waka'
Williams Tim	PhD Student, University of Auckland
Zhou Jess	Student, University of Auckland